

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: “THE BIGGEST CON IN HISTORY”: AMERICAN MYTH-MAKING IN THE STAGE AND SCREEN ADAPTATIONS OF *ANASTASIA*

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The story of Anastasia Nikolaevna Romanova has been engrained in the American imagination for nearly a century. This tale has often been told on stage and screen, depicting Anastasia and her most famous impersonator: Anna Anderson. The adaptation of Anna and Anastasia’s tale that has made the most lasting impact is the 1951 French play, *Anastasia*, by Marcelle Maurette, and its 1954 English translation by Guy Bolton. Four more adaptations have followed that progenitor play: the 1956 film, *Anastasia*; the 1965 operetta, *Anyá*; the 1997 animated film, *Anastasia*; and the 2017 musical, *Anastasia*. These five artistic adaptations evolved from one another, navigating their own history alongside changing American values. This thesis situates each production within American sociopolitics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, revealing how each production is far more indicative of American ideals than Russian history, particularly with regards to immigration, foreign policy, and feminism.

“THE BIGGEST CON IN HISTORY”: AMERICAN MYTH-MAKING IN THE  
STAGE AND SCREEN ADAPTATIONS OF *ANASTASIA*

by

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Figures.....	iv
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review and Methodology.....	4
Source Materials for the <i>Anastasia</i> Adaptations.....	13
Limitations and Terminology.....	15
Outline of Chapters.....	16
Chapter 1: “Spare Me My Family History!”: <i>Anastasia</i> the Tale.....	19
The White Russians.....	23
The Nobles and the Monarchists.....	29
Anna Anderson.....	31
The Evolving <i>Anastasia</i> Adaptations.....	33
Chapter 2: “I’ll Bless My Homeland ‘til I Die”: <i>Anastasia</i> the Immigrant.....	46
Long-Distance Nationalism.....	48
Homeland Nostalgia and the “Myth of Return”.....	56
“Homeward” and “Homeland”.....	62
The Great American Melting Pot.....	70
Chapter 3: “Everything’s in Red”: <i>Anastasia</i> the Victim.....	72
The “Acute” Cold War.....	74
The 1997 Film: Reinventing the Villain.....	79
The 2017 Musical: The Russian Enemy Reforged.....	83
Chapter 4: “Men are Such Babies”: <i>Anastasia</i> the Woman.....	82
The Bolshevik “New Woman”.....	91
Fairy Tale Feminism.....	97
Anastasia as Aurora.....	98
Anastasia as Cinderella.....	101
Anastasia as Odette.....	106
Anastasia as... Anastasia?.....	112
Conclusion.....	114
Appendix I.....	117
Bibliography.....	120

## List of Figures

Fig. 1: Anya overlooking St. Petersburg, screenshot from Don Bluth and Gary Goldman, dir. <i>Anastasia</i> , 1997; Los Angeles, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Animation Studios, 2005, DVD .....	56
Fig. 2: Christy Altomare in <i>Anastasia</i> , Photo by Joan Marcus, 2016, Published by the Hartford Stage .....	56
Fig. 3: “Homeward” .....	63
Fig. 4: Rachmaninov’s <i>Prelude in G minor</i> , Op. 23, No. 5 .....	64
Fig. 5: “In the Dark of the Night” .....	67
Fig. 6: “Stay I Pray You” .....	67
Fig. 7: “Let God Arise” .....	81
Fig. 8: Adolf Strakhov, <i>Emancipated Woman – Build Socialism!</i> , 1926, Lithograph on paper, The David King Collection, Tate .....	93
Fig. 9 Grigorii Mikhailovich Shegal, <i>Down with Kitchen Slavery!</i> , Russia Soviet Union 1931, Poster, Wikipedia Commons.....	93
Fig. 10 Evolution of Anya’s Costumes, screenshots from Don Bluth and Gary Goldman, dir. <i>Anastasia</i> , 1997; Los Angeles, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Animation Studios, 2005, DVD .....	104

## Introduction

“Goodbye. Don’t forget me. Many kisses from us all to you my darling. Your A.”<sup>1</sup>  
- Anastasia Nikolaevna to tutor Sydney Gibbes, August 1917

On July 17, 1918, Anastasia Nikolaevna Romanova, fourth daughter to former Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, carried her dog, Jimmy, in her arms as she and the entire Romanov family descended the cellar steps to the basement of the Impatiev House. For nearly two months they had been imprisoned in Yekaterinburg, having spent the last year under house arrest, first in the Alexander Palace, then Tobolsk, and then Yekaterinburg. On that July evening, the family had been woken in the middle of the night and told that they were being moved to a new location. Yet, as the family discovered in a matter of moments, that was a lie. After half an hour of firing, stabbing, and screaming, the smoke that filled the basement finally settled to reveal that the execution was complete. Anastasia had crouched against the wall beside her sister Maria, clutching Jimmy, when multiple bullets had ended her life. She was only seventeen years old.<sup>2</sup>

On February 27, 1920, *Fräulein Unbekannt* ("Miss Unknown") leapt into the Landwehrkanal in Berlin to end her life. Refusing to give details of who she was and where she came from, rumors began to circulate regarding her injuries, her bearing, and her past. Could she be a Romanov? Was it possible that one of them had survived and fled all the way to Berlin? While history has proven that *Fräulein Unbekannt*, who came to be known as Anna Anderson, was not Anastasia as she claimed to be for her entire life,

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<sup>1</sup> J.C. Trewin, *Tutor to the Tsarevich: An Intimate Portrait of the Last Days of the Russian Imperial Family* (London: Macmillan, 1975), 75.

<sup>2</sup> Greg King and Penny Wilson, *The Fate of the Romanovs* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2003), 297–312.

the mystery of both Anna Anderson and Anastasia Nikolaevna Romanova has persisted for nearly a century.<sup>3</sup>

Anderson's story and Anastasia's reality have since been represented in over twenty artistic variations all over the world. The first film to tell a variation of Anderson's supposed tale—albeit incredibly loosely—was *Clothes Make the Woman*, which premiered in the United States in 1928, the same year that Anna Anderson first visited the US.<sup>4</sup> Yet the adaptation of Anna and Anastasia's tale that has made the most lasting impact was the 1951 play, *Anastasia*, by French author, Marcelle Maurette, which was quickly translated into English by Guy Bolton, the prolific English-American playwright behind many musical comedies in the early twentieth century. It premiered in London in 1953 and then on Broadway in 1954, and from that moment further, the Anastasia mythos would find a place in the American imagination. Four more adaptations have followed directly in the footsteps of that progenitor play: the 1956 film, *Anastasia*; the 1965 failed operetta, *Anya*; the 1997 animated film, *Anastasia*; and the brand new 2017 musical, *Anastasia*.<sup>5</sup> While other adaptations have also proven successful, these five artistic adaptations follow the same line of evolution. Instead of generally incorporating the historical details of both Anastasia and Anna Anderson as many of the standalone pieces do, these five adaptations navigate their own history and changing American values.

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<sup>3</sup> Greg King and Penny Wilson, *The Resurrection of the Romanovs: Anastasia, Anna Anderson, and the World's Greatest Royal Mystery* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 90–100.

<sup>4</sup> King and Wilson, *The Resurrection of the Romanovs*, 204.

<sup>5</sup> Ken Mandelbaum, *Not Since Carrie: Forty Years of Broadway Musical Flops* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 235–236.



Each of these stories has ultimately faced the same dilemma: how to blend history with narratives that resonate with American audiences. *Anastasia*, the new 2017 musical, was greeted with enthusiastic audiences, including sold-out performances and one of the strongest box-office advances of 2016-17 season.<sup>6</sup> With such an outpouring of fans of the 1997 animated film flooding into the Broadhurst Theatre to witness the new retelling of *Anastasia*, it raises the question: how does Russian history—or lack thereof—find footing amongst audiences that possess contemporary perspectives and opinions on Russia and the Soviet Union, particularly in this modern Cold War?<sup>7</sup> Was this a new phenomenon? How had the *Anastasia* adaptations navigated past American ideals during the original Cold War?<sup>8</sup> As this thesis will demonstrate, this particular story, from the 1954 play until now, has always navigated American expectations and sociopolitical issues with varying levels of success.

Considering the convoluted relationship that the United States continues to share with Russia, even after the end of the last Cold War, an analysis of the changing narratives in *Anastasia* presents the unique opportunity to trace its continuing adaptations alongside shifting attitudes, both social and political, within the US and in its attitude towards Russia over the past sixty-five years. This thesis is an analysis of three such major trends—views on immigration, changes in foreign policy, and the evolution of the four waves of feminism—and how the *Anastasia* narrative has adapted to suit changing

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<sup>6</sup> Gordon Cox, “How Broadway’s ‘Anastasia’ Discovered Its Surprisingly Sweeping Fanbase,” *Variety*, April 21, 2017, <http://variety.com/2017/legit/news/anastasia-fanastasia-broadway-musical-1202391607>.

<sup>7</sup> While I cannot claim that the current period is officially a new Cold War, it is fair to say that the current political climate between Russia and the U.S. certainly harkens back to Cold War aggression. Characterized by U.S. statements following Vladimir Putin’s election in 2012, Russia’s annexing of Crimea in 2014, Russian involvement in Syria, and Russia’s interference in the 2016 election, relations are certainly at a new low.

<sup>8</sup> For my purposes, I am classifying the Cold War from 1947–1991, although historians and scholars do not consistently agree upon these dates.

American perspectives on all three since the beginning of the Cold War at the expense of Russian history.

### Literature Review and Methodology

While there have been a vast number of artistic adaptations of the Anastasia and Romanov mythos, I have chosen these five adaptations because they specifically evolve from the same progenitor production: Guy Bolton's English translation of Marcelle Maurette's 1951 play *Anastasia*. To date, there have been very few studies of these artistic representations of the *Anastasia* mythos. Those that do feature all of the five primary adapted works do so largely within the context of fidelity studies by chronicling their historical accuracy or their existence within the context of Anastasia or Anna Anderson's biographical history, without deconstructing them as reflections of American sociopolitics.<sup>9</sup> Therefore the existing scholarship discusses what the shows are *not* far more than what they *are*.

There are certainly exceptions to this, notably Marit Knollmueller's "Anastasia(s)" chapter in *Bringing History to Life Through Film*, which analyzes the narrative of godlessness in the 1997 film; Kimberly A. Williams' *Imagining Russia: Making Feminist Sense of American Nationalism in U.S.-Russian Relations*, which explores the engendered roles of the US (masculine) and Russia (feminine) as reflected in the two *Anastasia* films; and Michael J. Strada and Harold R. Toper's *Friend or Foe? Russians in American Film and Foreign Policy, 1933-1991*, which contextualizes the

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<sup>9</sup> See for example James Blair Lovell, *Anastasia: The Lost Princess* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991).

1956 film through its Russian characters and US foreign policy during the Cold War.<sup>10</sup> Yet while these examples step beyond fidelity studies, they all leave the 1954 play and the 1965 operetta as footnotes or entirely unmentioned, prioritizing the film versions at the expense of the stage adaptations.<sup>11</sup> Even Greg King and Penny Wilson's exhaustive work *The Resurrection of the Romanovs: Anastasia, Anna Anderson, and the World's Greatest Royal Mystery* merely mentions each of the five adaptations alongside various others that tell the tale, reporting on each within the historical context of Anna Anderson's biography and nothing more.<sup>12</sup>

Because no one has yet explored this specific evolution of Guy Bolton's *Anastasia* translation from 1954 play, 1956 film, 1965 operetta, 1997 animated film, and 2017 musical, and particularly not as a study of music, this thesis will offer a unique reading of each individual work, demonstrate how the adaptations evolve from one another, and how they fit within the framework of relevant interdisciplinary fields, such as sociology, political science, and women's studies. In addition, as many of the issues I am dealing with are happening right now, with respect to history, politics, and the most recent musical, in many cases I will be relying on periodicals rather than monographs, as well as my own analyses.

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<sup>10</sup> Marit Knollmueller, "Anastasia(s): Cinematic Resurrections of an Imperial Grand Duchess (1928 – 1997)," in *Bringing History to Life Through Film: The Art of Cinematic Storytelling*, ed. Kathryn Anne Morey (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2014), 3–20; Kimberly A. Williams, *Imagining Russia: Making Feminist Sense of American Nationalism in U.S.–Russian Relations* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012).; and Michael J. Strada and Harold R. Troper, *Friend or Foe? Russians in American Film and Foreign Policy, 1933–1991* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1997).

<sup>11</sup> See for example Strada and Troper, *Friend or Foe?*; Knollmueller, "Anastasia(s)"; and Harlow Robinson, *Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood's Russians: Biography of an Image* (Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> King and Wilson, *The Resurrection of the Romanovs*, 204–206, and 240.

In order to contextualize both the production history of the *Anastasia* adaptations, as well as the history of the Russian Revolution and the subsequent White Russian emigration, this thesis utilizes the extensive scholarship of Greg King and Penny Wilson, whose seminal monographs *The Fate of the Romanovs* and *The Resurrection of the Romanovs: Anastasia, Anna Anderson, and the World's Greatest Royal Mystery* form a foundation within any scholarly work regarding the assassination of the Romanov family and the rumors surrounding Anastasia's supposed survival.<sup>13</sup> Additional sources that proved important to analyzing the myth of Anna Anderson include John Klier and Helen Mingay's *The Quest for Anastasia*, Helen Rappaport's *The Romanov Sisters*, and Robert K. Massie's *The Romanovs: The Final Chapter*.<sup>14</sup> For a historical background on the Russian Revolution and its aftermath from a broader perspective than that of the Romanov family, *The Russian Revolution* by Richard Pipes and *Petrograd 1917: Witnesses to the Russian Revolution* by John Pinfold proved useful for establishing the short- and long-term history of both the February and October Revolutions, as well as the subsequent civil war.<sup>15</sup> Along a similar vein, works such as Douglas Smith's *Former People: The Final Days of the Russian Aristocracy*; Robert C. Williams' *Culture in Exile: Russian Émigrés in Germany, 1881–1941*; Leonid Livak's *Russian Émigrés in the Intellectual and Literary Life of Interwar France: A Bibliographic Essay*; and *Coming to Terms with the Soviet Union* by Hilde Hardeman have proved useful in framing the

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<sup>13</sup> King and Wilson, *The Fate of the Romanovs* and *The Resurrection of the Romanovs*

<sup>14</sup> John Klier and Helen Mingay, *The Quest for Anastasia: Solving the Mystery of the Lost Romanovs* (Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1997); and Helen Rappaport, *The Romanov Sisters: The Lost Lives of the Daughters of Nicholas and Alexandra* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2014); Robert K. Massie, *The Romanovs: The Final Chapter* (New York: Random House, 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991) and John Pinfold, *Petrograd 1917: Witnesses to the Russian Revolution* (Bodleian Library: University of Oxford, 2017).

Russian émigré experience abroad.<sup>16</sup>

My study of the *Anastasia* adaptations as they relate to the changing American perspectives on immigration represents four aspects of immigration studies that are found in both American sociopolitical narratives and in the *Anastasia* adaptations: diaspora, long-distance nationalism, homeland nostalgia, and the American “melting pot.” The juxtaposition between the historical reality of “Russia Abroad” and the accuracy of its representation in these five productions, contextualized by the trends found within immigration scholarship, demonstrate how the *Anastasia* adaptations are situated in the context of American immigration politics.

Two characteristics of diaspora—the dispersion of a group of people from their homeland—that situate my analysis are long-distance nationalism and homeland nostalgia. Nina Glick Schiller’s 2002 article, “Long Distance Nationalism,” in conjunction with the various works of Benedict Anderson and Zlatko Skrbish, define long-distance nationalism as a step beyond the general longing for home found in diaspora; under long-distance nationalism, emigrant populations engage in political movements abroad, intending to influence the political landscape in their homeland.<sup>17</sup> Historically, Russian émigrés were indeed long-distance nationalists, engaging in politics both in their

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<sup>16</sup> Douglas Smith, *Former People: The Final Days of the Russian Aristocracy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2012); Robert C. Williams’ *Culture in Exile: Russian Émigrés in Germany, 1881–1941* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972); Leonid Livak, *Russian Émigrés in the Intellectual and Literary Life of Interwar France: A Bibliographical Essay* (Montreal, Canada: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010); and Hilde Hardeman, *Coming to Terms with the Soviet Regime: The “Changing Signposts” Movement Among Russian Emigres in the Early 1920s* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> Nina Glick Schiller, “Long Distance Nationalism,” in *The Anthropology of Politics: A Reader in Ethnography, Theory, and Critique*, edited by Joan Vincent (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2002): 356–365, DOI: 10.1007/978-0-387-29904-4\_59; Benedict Anderson, “The new world disorder,” *New Left Review*, 193, (1993): 2–13; Benedict Anderson, “Exodus,” *Critical Inquiry*, 20 (1994): 314–327; Benedict Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World*. London: Verso (1998); and Zlatko Skrbish, *Long-distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands, and Identities* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 1999).

dislocated communities in Paris and Berlin, and their former homeland, attempting to end the Bolsheviks' reign and install whomever they sympathized with to power.

Skrbiš develops this ideal further in his work, *Long-distance Nationalism: Diasporas, Homelands, and Identities*, exploring the concept of long-distance nationalism in conjunction with homeland nostalgia and the “myth of return,” which first appeared in diaspora studies in the late 1970s.<sup>18</sup> Based on his study and conclusions, along with those of Svetlana Boym in *The Future of Nostalgia*, homeland nostalgia consists of increased longing for a homeland that will never be and likely never was to begin with.<sup>19</sup> That longing is intensified when diaspora groups leave their homeland for political reasons, and is maintained through the myth of return, in which immigrant groups maintain a fantasy of one day returning to their home country, either permanently or temporarily. In addition, my analysis of key songs in the 2017 *Anastasia* utilizes Boym's study of nostalgia and kitsch to situate the musical's representation of the émigrés, particularly when compared to the depiction of the émigrés of previous adaptations.

Tenets of diaspora and homeland nostalgia theories have challenged the earlier concept of the American “the melting pot,” a myth that resonates with some Americans to this day, in spite of a turbulent and controversial history. The melting pot is largely viewed as a philosophy of assimilation, geared at immigration populations to encourage “Americanization,” yet its definition has varied greatly over time. All variations on the melting pot myth ultimately ignore the cultural pluralism and evolving multiculturalism present in immigration studies today. As American productions, the *Anastasia*

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<sup>18</sup> See for example Muhammad Anwar, *The Myth of Return: Pakistanis in Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1979).

<sup>19</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

adaptations navigate those conflicting perspectives on assimilation, particularly in the latter two productions. In order to contextualize my reading of *Anastasia* through this evolving concept, I have consulted Jose-Antonio Orosco's work, *Toppling the Melting Pot: Immigration and Multiculturalism in American Pragmatism*; the collection of essays, *Reinventing the Melting Pot: The New Immigrants and What It Means to Be American*; and David Michael Smith's article, "The American Melting Pot: A National Myth in Public and Popular Discourse."<sup>20</sup>

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In order to explore the relationship between American foreign policy and the antagonist structure of the *Anastasia* adaptations, I have found the Cold War scholarship within the field of film studies particularly helpful. Michael J. Strada and Harold R. Troper's exhaustive work, *Friend or Foe? Russians in American Film and Foreign Policy, 1933–1991*, represents both foreign policy and public opinion in key moments of the Cold War in which these *Anastasia* adaptations occur—particularly their chapter "Acute Cold War, 1945–1962."<sup>21</sup> While their study ended with the Cold War in 1991, other scholars have furthered the conversation into the present day, such as Helena and Margaret B. Goscilo's *Fade From Red* and Harlow Robinson's *Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood's Russians*, which I have also used to contextualize the 1997 film and 2017 musical.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Jose-Antonio Orosco, *Toppling the Melting Pot: Immigration and Multiculturalism in American Pragmatism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016); Tamar Jacoby, ed, *Reinventing the Melting Pot: The New Immigrants and What It Means to Be American* (New York: Basic Books, 2004); and David Michael Smith, "The American Melting Pot: A National Myth in Public and Popular Discourse," *National Identities* 14, no. 4 (2012): 387–402.

<sup>21</sup> Strada and Troper, *Friend or Foe?*

<sup>22</sup> Helena and Margaret B. Goscilo, *Fade from Red: The Cold War Ex-Enemy in Russian and American Film 1990–2005* (Washington D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2014) and Robinson, *Russians in Hollywood*.

This abundance of scholarship in film studies regarding Russian subjects and characters unfortunately does not exist in theater studies, musical or non-musical. While there are certainly a great many efforts to contextualize overall trends of the Cold War within theater, there is no specific study dedicated solely to the representation of Russian characters and subjects on the American stage, within or without the context of the Cold War. Granted, Russian characters have found their way onto the screen far more frequently than onto the stage, and multiple theater scholars published case studies of individual works that feature Russian characters (particularly *Fiddler on the Roof*).<sup>23</sup> Yet, it still seems striking that there is no work dedicated to portraying Russianness on stage at a time of such great tension between these two nations. John Bush Jones' chapter in *Our Musicals Ourselves: A Cultural History of the Broadway Musical*, "From Isolationism to Idealism in The Cold War Years," is particularly exemplary of that problem, for it explores the way musical theater engaged with Cold War culture, but fails to represent shows that specifically explore Russian subjects.<sup>24</sup>

Hollywood movies constitute rich repositories of the inner life of the nation. Or, to quote another film scholar, Peter Rollins, Hollywood is an "unwitting recorder of national moods."<sup>25</sup> This ultimately means that films with Russian subjects say more about America than they do about Russia, their ostensible subject matter, and thus may be deconstructed to reveal popular fears and obsessions of their audiences. And what has been proven true for Hollywood film in relation to American foreign policy, can just as

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<sup>23</sup> See for example: Alisa Solomon, *Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2013).

<sup>24</sup> John Bush Jones, *Our Musicals Ourselves: A Cultural History of the Broadway Musical* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> Peter Rollins, *Hollywood as Historian* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 1.



easily be applied to the world of theater. After all, as a form of popular entertainment serving broad audiences, musicals and plays dramatized, mirrored, or challenged our deeply held cultural attitudes and beliefs throughout the twentieth century until today. Theater and film can therefore be viewed “both *in* history and *as* history.”<sup>26</sup>

As I carry my discussion of American foreign policy into the modern era through my discussion of the 2017 musical *Anastasia*, scholarly works on contemporary conflict with Russia shift from published books and journals and move to mainstream publications in journalism, such as those by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The New Yorker*. The articles “From ‘reset’ to ‘pause’: The real story behind Hillary Clinton’s feud with Vladimir Putin” by Joby Warrick and Karen DeYoung for *The Washington Post* and “Trump, Putin, and the New Cold War” by Evan Osnos, David Remnick, and Joshua Yaffa for *The New Yorker* serve to frame my discussion of the modern political environment as a context for *Anastasia*’s vilification of the Soviet Union.<sup>27</sup>

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For my reading of the shifting representation of gender in *Anastasia* adaptations, I analyze each adaption within the framework of early Bolshevik theories of “the New Woman,” the four waves of American feminism, and fairytale feminist studies. The aspects of scholarship on American feminism that proved particularly valuable include

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<sup>26</sup> Jones, *Our Musicals Ourselves*, 1.

<sup>27</sup> Joby Warrick and Karen DeYoung, “From ‘reset’ to ‘pause’: The real story behind Hillary Clinton’s feud with Vladimir Putin,” *The Washington Post*, November 3, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/from-reset-to-pause-the-real-story-behind-hillary-clintons-feud-with-vladimir-putin/2016/11/03/f575f9fa-a116-11e6-8832-23a007c77bb4\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.dc72b3ce042d](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/from-reset-to-pause-the-real-story-behind-hillary-clintons-feud-with-vladimir-putin/2016/11/03/f575f9fa-a116-11e6-8832-23a007c77bb4_story.html?utm_term=.dc72b3ce042d) and Evan Osnos, David Remnick, and Joshua Yaffa, “Trump, Putin, and the New Cold War,” *The New Yorker*, March 6, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/03/06/trump-putin-and-the-new-cold-war>.

feminist histories, analyses of fairy tale feminism, and discussions of feminist trends in theater and film. Scholarly works in women's studies dedicated to Bolshevik feminism include Barbara Evans Clements' *Daughters of the Revolution: A History of Women in the U.S.S.R.*, and Julia Mickenberg's *American Girls in Red Russia: Chasing the Soviet Dream*.<sup>28</sup> While the former serves as an overall survey of the Russian female experience throughout the lifespan of the Soviet Union, Mickenberg's work explores the history of American women who bought into the Soviet project, traveling and settling in the USSR, sometimes temporarily and sometimes permanently, during the 1920s and 30s. Therefore, *American Girls* serves as the mediator between Bolshevik history and representations of femininity in stage and screen adaptations of *Anastasia*, particularly in the 2017 musical.

Regarding my exploration of American feminism, I utilize two works to frame my reading of the adaptations within the history of the four waves of feminism, including the most recent fourth wave that has developed since 2012. The first history, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* by Estelle B. Freedman, examines the feminist movement over the past two hundred years, concluding in 2002 with postfeminism.<sup>29</sup> The second represents the divide that has continued to exist between postfeminists and feminists in the third and fourth wave feminist movements: Nicola Rivers' *Postfeminism(s) and the Arrival of the Fourth Wave: Turning Tides*.<sup>30</sup>

Additionally, there were two specific works regarding the representation of feminism on stage and screen that informed my analysis: Patricia Mellencamp's *A Fine*

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<sup>28</sup> Barbara Evans Clements, *Daughters of the Revolution: A History of Women in the U.S.S.R.*, European History Series (Arlington Heights, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1994) and Julia Mickenberg's *American Girls in Red Russia: Chasing the Soviet Dream* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017).

<sup>29</sup> Estelle B. Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002).

<sup>30</sup> Nicola Rivers, *Postfeminism(s) and the Arrival of the Fourth Wave: Turning Tides* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

*Romance: Five Ages of Film Feminism* and Stacy Wolf's *Changed for Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical*.<sup>31</sup> Each of these sources uses the American feminist waves in conjunction with theatrical and cinematic case studies to categorize and analyze theatrical and cinematic productions throughout the twentieth century. Functioning in a similar capacity, many fairy tale scholarly works also offer this applied methodology, which suits my analysis of *Anastasia* as a feminist fairy tale. This subject has been explored in several major articles, most recently including Donald Haase's "Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship: A Critical Survey and Bibliography"; Amanda Prah's "Revising and Feminizing the Fairy Tale in *Anastasia*"; and Christy Williams' "The Shoe Still Fits: *Ever After* and the Pursuit of Feminist Cinderella."<sup>32</sup> These articles range from theoretical essays that explore the often contradictory nature of the fairy tale genre with feminist themes, to case studies that apply these theories to a variety of contemporary examples.

#### Source Materials for the *Anastasia* Adaptations

The vast majority of primary sources for this project consist of the scripts and scores of the original productions of each *Anastasia* retelling. For the film productions in 1956 and 1997, I have utilized the original theatrical release.<sup>33</sup> The scripts consulted for

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<sup>31</sup> Patricia Mellencamp, *A Fine Romance: Five Ages of Film Feminism* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1995) and Stacy Wolf, *Changed for Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical* (London: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>32</sup> Donald Haase, "Feminist Fairy-Tale Scholarship: A Critical Survey and Bibliography," *Marvels & Tales* 14, no. 1 (2000): 15–63. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41380741>; Amanda Prah's "Revising and Feminizing the Fairy Tale in *Anastasia*," *HowlRound*, June 27, 2017, <http://howlround.com/revising-and-feminizing-the-fairy-tale-in-anastasia>; and Christy Williams, "The Shoe Still Fits: *Ever After* and the Pursuit of a Feminist Cinderella," in *Fairy Tale Films: Visions of Ambiguity*, edited by Pauline Greenhill and Sidney Eve Matrix, 99–115 (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 2010).

<sup>33</sup> Anatole Litvak, dir. *Anastasia*, 1956 (Beverly Hills, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2003), DVD and Don Bluth and Gary Goldman, dir. *Anastasia*, 1997 (Los Angeles, CA: Twentieth Century Fox Animation Studios, 2005), DVD.

the theatrical productions are the appropriate published version that corresponds to the performance's official premiere. Unless otherwise noted, musical examples are excerpted from published scores, although emphasis and formatting are my own.

For *Anya*, no script or score was ever published. Therefore, I have used the original Broadway cast album, as well as *Anya*'s original 1965 playbill, and two typescripts of pre-Broadway versions of the script, all of which are housed at the Billy Rose Theatre Archive in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, to construct an accurate representation of the failed production.<sup>34</sup> The first of these typescripts was a working draft utilized by Maggie Task, who understudied Irra Petina in the role of Katrina.<sup>35</sup> Dated 15 September 1965, it features the most up-to-date revisions, but the pages are largely out of order and unclear, with handwritten revisions scribbled on the back of seemingly random pages with shorthand allusions to their appropriate insertions. Because of that, I could not rely on that script alone, despite its date being the closest to the Broadway premiere. The second typescript of *Anya* script was dated 30 March 1965, printed by Frank Productions Inc., and filed with the New York Public Library.<sup>36</sup> I have used what I can decipher from Maggie Task's printed and handwritten script, as well as the song and scene outline from the show's playbill, to contextualize further changes made to the March typescript, in an effort to understand any last-minute changes in the show as accurately as possible before its premiere in November 1965.

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<sup>34</sup> Robert Wright, George Forest, and Sergei Rachmaninoff, *Anya – the Original Broadway Cast Recording*, originally released in 1965, Kritzerland, KR-20012-2, 2009, CD and Playbill, *Anya* (New York: Playbill, 1965).

<sup>35</sup> Guy Bolton and George Abbott, *Anya: A Musical Drama*, based on the Play by Marcelle Maurette, unpublished script, Dated September 15, 1965, Typescript, the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Research Collection.

<sup>36</sup> Guy Bolton and George Abbott, *Anya: A Musical Drama*, based on the Play by Marcelle Maurette, unpublished script. Dated March 30, 1965. Typescript, the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Research Collection.

While the most recent production of *Anastasia* has the most readily available material, simply due to its creation in the internet age, its script is also yet to be published. After attending two separate performances of *Anastasia* on May 20, 2017 and January 21, 2018, I secured the official script from Tom Kirdahy Productions.<sup>37</sup> While the script does not represent every line, as many were either ad-libbed or viewed as unnecessary for inclusion in the script, I have utilized the dialogue I transcribed at both live performances in tandem with the official script, representing the performed production in its entirety.

### Limitations and Terminology

While the *Anastasia* adaptations I will be discussing are American creations, Russian and Soviet history and culture are directly relevant to the argument in this thesis. This made my lack of Russian-language proficiency a limitation when aiming to represent Russian ideas and texts. Consequently, I was only able to represent the Russian scholarship available in the English translation; any quotations from these sources featured here are translated in those publications. When published translations were unavailable, I have consulted multiple Russian speakers to establish the meaning of the Russian text as clearly and accurately as possible.

Similarly, I have not utilized Marcelle Maurette's original 1951 French play *Anastasia*. I instead treat Guy Bolton's English translation of the play, prepared for London and Broadway stages, as the original text that the subsequent show and film scripts would adapt. Whether or not Bolton's translation is also an adaptation, and to

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<sup>37</sup> Terrence McNally, Lynn Ahrens, and Stephen Flaherty, *Anastasia: A New Musical*, Unpublished script, Post-Broadway Version, dated March 2, 2018, PDF document.

what extent it may or may not have departed from the French original lies therefore outside the scope of this thesis. It may, however, prove a fruitful avenue for further research.

Please note that between the adaptations, character names are slightly altered to either represent more accurate Russian names, or to differentiate them from their previous versions. For instance, Anna, the Anastasia impersonator, begins as Anna in the 1954 play and the 1956 film, but becomes Anya in the 1965 production onward. In addition, while Bounine's name is consistently spelled in the French manner (at least within the published scripts, if not within the scholarship on the subject), his social status is altered from Prince to General and then back to Prince. For the 1997 animated feature, Bounine was forgotten entirely, and the street rat, Dimitri, took his place as Anya's "promoter" and love interest. Then the spelling of Dimitri was altered to Dmitry in the 2017 musical. In order to compensate for these discrepancies over time, I am opting to use the most appropriate version as used in the rendition I am discussing. In cases where multiple versions are being discussed, I default to the most recent spelling, or whichever version will maintain the most clarity. For a complete list of characters throughout the adaptation history, please consult Appendix I.

### *Outline of Chapters*

While this thesis does not center on fidelity criticism in the Anastasia adaptations, it does explore the ways in which their changing narratives navigate, exploit, and subvert historical accounts as they respond to and reinforce the changing American perceptions of Russia. Chapter One therefore provides the necessary historical context regarding the

Russian Revolution, the documented fate of the Romanov family, the Russian émigré experience in Europe between the Revolution and WWII, and the subsequent emergence of imposters—most famously, Anna Anderson—in the aftermath of their tragic murder. The chapter also covers the history and evolution of the *Anastasia* adaptations, outlining the plots of each adaptation and highlighting major changes in the narrative between the 1954 play and the 2017 musical.

Chapter Two contextualizes the *Anastasia* adaptations both within the historical reality of the Russian émigré experience and the evolving American attitudes towards immigration and immigrants. I apply the concepts developed in immigration and diaspora studies, such as long-distance nationalism, homeland nostalgia, and the conflicting narratives of the American “melting pot,” to illustrate how each subsequent rendition of *Anastasia* situates itself within the contradictory discourse of assimilation and cultural pluralism in the United States.

The focus of the third chapter is the evolving villainy in the productions within the context of American foreign policy. I will offer a reading of the various *Anastasia* villains as they reflect the changing Russian-American relations from the old Cold War, the Yeltsin years, and now under Vladimir Putin. From vague allusions to the Bolshevik regime, to the outright Soviet villainy found in the most recent productions, these adaptations have lived and died by correctly or incorrectly anticipating American social and political perspectives on Russia. While the Cold War officially ended with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the current tensions between the US and Vladimir Putin’s Russia demonstrate the continued relevance of this approach, even to the most recent *Anastasia* production.

Chapter Four focuses on Anya herself, exploring the representation of her femininity and independence in the context of the evolving ideology of American feminism. I will briefly explore the tenets of Bolshevik feminism, both as a Bolshevik theory and as a Soviet practice, to contrast the realities of Soviet women with the representation of Anya's character in the latter two productions that feature Russian settings, demonstrating how both versions impose American ideals over Russian reality. In addition, I will situate the evolving feminist representations of Anastasia within the context of the fairy tales featured in or otherwise metaphorically connected to them: *Sleeping Beauty* in the earlier three adaptations, *Cinderella* in the 1997 animated film, and *Odette* in the 2017 musical.



## Chapter 1:

### “Spare Me My Family History!”: *Anastasia* the Tale

Before I set out to examine the retellings of Anastasia’s supposed fate, it is necessary first to contextualize their central narrative historically. This includes a brief outline of the chain of events leading up to and following that fateful night in Yekaterinburg; the biography of Anna Anderson (also known as Anna Tschaikovsky, Manahan, or Fräulein Unbekannt), born Franziska Schanzkowska of Poland; as well as major plot points of the five aforementioned *Anastasia* adaptations. While I am placing less emphasis on the treatment of history in each of the productions in favor of the evolution of their textual and musical choices, history is an inherent part of this tale, and is necessary for understanding how these productions navigate both the rumors and the reality of the fall of the Romanovs and the rise of Anna Anderson, in order to represent American values and ideals under the guise of Russian history.

In the midst of WWI, Russia was struggling with its morale as well as its leadership as Tsar Nicholas II, Tsarina Alexandra Feodorovna, and their five children grew more and more out of touch with the daily lives of the Russian people. Nicholas and Alexandra were incredibly fearful of their son’s hemophilia, which exacerbated their already established insular and antisocial tendencies, ultimately making little effort to empathize with or ease the suffering of the lower classes who starved in the wake of the

war. The tsar could not lead the military to any substantial victory, and the tsarina failed to end or ease the domestic turmoil at home in his absence.<sup>1</sup>

While the tsar seemed to recognize as early as 1915 that his reputation was crumbling, and that the monarchy could be at stake, he ultimately made the situation worse by taking direct command of the Russian army on the front, despite all advice to the contrary. In late February 1917, the Russian monarchy effectively came to an end as a result of what is now known as the February Revolution. The uprising erupted spontaneously, sparked by women waiting in line for rationed flour and bread, and leading to hundreds of thousands of workers taking to the streets, and over the next several days joined by mutinous military garrisons. The State Duma quickly formed a provisional government, and Nicholas arrived from the front to Petrograd in chaos, despite his conviction that the dispatches he had received from government officials were likely an overreaction. Pressured by the provisional government, Nicholas II abdicated for himself and his son, Alexei, and his family was placed under house arrest at the Alexander Palace.

In the following months, Russia was ruled by a dual government of two competing government bodies: The Provisional Committee of the State Duma that spoke for the nobility and bourgeoisie, and the Petrograd Soviet that represented the proletariat. Divided by their respectively capitalist and socialist ideologies, the two organizations had different goals and perspectives on the Revolution, making conflict inevitable. The summer of 1917 saw the two rival powers clashing perpetually (most notably during the

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise specified, historical background on the fall of Imperial Russia and the Russian Revolution is summarized from Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* and Pinfold, *Petrograd 1917: Witnesses to the Russian Revolution*.

so-called July Days and the Kornilov Affair). All the while, the public pressure to withdraw from WWI mounted, as the unrest caused by unfulfilled promises of peace, work, and bread continued. In August 1917, in the face of escalating tension between political factions, the threat of a Bolshevik coup, the royal family was moved to Tobolsk for their protection. This proved wise: by September, peasant and worker uprisings would be erupting all across the country.

Led by Vladimir Lenin, the Bolsheviks organized a military coup in October 1917, overthrowing the Provisional Government in Petrograd in what is now known as the October Revolution. After finally negotiating a ceasefire with Central Powers in early 1918 after the German invasion of Ukraine, the Bolsheviks spent the next half of a year solidifying their government in the midst of the Russian Civil War. While the “revolution” itself had largely gone without resistance, and a great many heralded the end of Russian involvement in WWI, the days, weeks, and months to follow would not go smoothly. The opponents of the new regime aligned to organize a military response, with forces known as the White Army to contrast with the Bolsheviks’ Red Army. Comprised of a combination of monarchists, capitalists, and various other branches of socialists (such as the Mensheviks), the White Army was divided on its ultimate goal for Russia after overthrowing the Bolsheviks. Despite this division, the Romanovs served as a rallying point for a great many of the Whites, and thus presented the Bolsheviks with a strong dilemma: what to do with the Romanov family?

The Russian Civil War raged on from 1917 to 1922, leaving an already suffering nation in further financial and social chaos. The Bolsheviks remained wary that the Whites might attempt to liberate the family. Ultimately it was decided that Tobolsk was

far too accessible and far too cushy for the deposed Tsar and his family, and in spring 1918 they were moved once more, this time to Yekaterinburg, until a more permanent decision could be made.<sup>2</sup> When in July 1918 the White Army grew dangerously close to Yekaterinburg, albeit completely unaware that the Romanovs were being held there, Bolshevik leadership panicked and made the rash and regrettable decision to execute the entire royal family. While Lenin's direct ties to the decision have never been irrefutably proven, there is very little doubt among historians that the murders were carried out with his permission.<sup>3</sup>

On July 17, 1918, Nicholas and his family were led into the basement under the guise of their protection, only to be sentenced to death by a firing squad. The gathered Bolsheviks promptly began firing at the huddled family, and Nicholas found his end almost immediately. Yet after the smoke cleared following the initial volley of bullets, the vast majority of the family still lived, likely due to jewels sewn into the lining of the girls' clothing that deflected most of the bullets. The shooting swiftly resumed, and when it continued to prove ineffective, the executioners resorted to bayonets and the butts of their guns to finish the deed. The horribly botched execution resulted in over half an hour of firing, stabbing, and beating. From there, the executioners scrambled to hide the bodies, resulting in a prolonged attempt to adequately dispose of the remains that lasted hours. The bodies were mutilated and dragged back and forth between multiple graves over the course of the next 12 hours, and two of the Romanovs—likely Tsarevich Alexei, and either Maria or Anastasia—were buried separately. The creation of two graves was

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<sup>2</sup> Information regarding the last months of the surviving Romanovs is summarized from King and Wilson, *The Fate of the Romanovs*.

<sup>3</sup> King and Wilson, *Fate of the Romanovs*, 282–283.

likely to cause confusion in the event that the grave was ever discovered, as it certainly did in the years to come.<sup>4</sup>

In the days that followed, Nicholas Romanov's death was made public by the Bolsheviks. Yet for the next half a century, a campaign of disinformation waged by the Soviets regarding the fate of his family generated rumors that perhaps one family member might have survived. It is uncertain why Anastasia became the source of the fascination, and not her brother, the heir, or one of her older sisters; perhaps the meaning of the name "Anastasia"—rebirth—offered a symbolism too enticing to ignore. Be that as it may, the tale was soon running wild in European and American imaginations. Not until 1989 would the world learn of the 1979 discovery of the first burial site;<sup>5</sup> and the second burial site would be uncovered as late as 2007.<sup>6</sup>

### *The White Russians*

A central plot point in any *Anastasia* adaptation involves the presence of Russian émigrés in a European city chosen for its setting (be it Berlin or Paris). As I analyze the positioning of the *Anastasia* adaptations in the scope of American perspectives on immigration, it is therefore necessary to outline briefly the history of Russian emigration in the modern era.<sup>7</sup> There have been three waves of Russian emigration after the 1917 Revolution, the first of which occurred between 1917 and 1921 during the Revolution and civil war. The second wave of Russian émigrés left after World War II, and the third

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<sup>4</sup> King and Wilson, *The Fate of the Romanovs*, 129–331.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 381–434

<sup>6</sup> King and Wilson, *The Resurrection of the Romanovs* 331–334.

<sup>7</sup> Historical context regarding the White Russian experience in both Paris and Berlin, as well as those who remained behind (largely by force), is based on Smith, *Former People*; Williams, *Culture in Exile*; Livak, *Russian Émigrés in the Intellectual and Literary Life of Interwar*; and Hardeman, *Coming to Terms with the Soviet Union*.

wave began in earnest in 1971, when the Soviet regime began permitting large numbers of people to leave. The second and third wave were notably smaller than the initial first wave, and lacked its definition, particularly in the development of Russian communities abroad. The emphasis on European communities would only define the first wave, as the second and third waves would settle primarily in the United States.

It is best to regard 1921 as the starting point for “Russia Abroad,” as it is marked by the primary defeat of armed anti-Soviet resistance and the mass exodus of its participants and supporters. While there were many exiles who identified with the White Cause who went abroad before 1921, the organization of Russians in their foreign abodes was rather loose until that year, largely because those communities imagined a far quicker return to Russia than history ultimately allowed them. The Russian refugees flooding into Europe in 1921 were no longer simply members of the White Army and old Russian government, but political émigrés, defeated at home and facing the prospect of isolation abroad. The demise of Russia Abroad as a cultural independent and socially coherent identity coincides with France's military defeat in 1940 when Russians were forced to flee the European battle ground.

This first wave, or “White Wave,” consisted of aristocrats, soldiers of the defeated White Army, well-off merchants and businessmen suddenly lacking capital, and assorted others who were at odds with a new Bolshevik order. The exodus spread over the Balkans, Central Europe, the Baltic countries, and Western Europe, with the majority of Russians heading to Bulgaria, Germany, and France. While almost all pre-revolutionary social strata were involved in this migration, the Bolshevik repression of all free thought resulted in members of the professional and intellectual elites constituting a far greater

share of this group then they had of the population of pre-revolutionary Russia as a whole.

Berlin was the main population center for the Russian emigration between 1919 and 1923. Germany proved a logical place as the center of Russian emigration immediately following the Revolution. First and foremost, it was closest geographically to the Russian empire, and visas were relatively easy to acquire. And while jobs were difficult to come by, due to the mark's low value, the purchasing power of foreign aid was a lot higher than it would be, converted to francs or pounds. By the end of 1919, approximately 70,000 Russians were living in Berlin alone, and were arriving at a rate of more than 1,000 a month. Yet after another brief increase in the population between 1922 and 1923 due to Germany's cheaper cost of living, the German mark collapsed in the second half of 1923, followed by a general exodus of Russian émigrés to France. At its peak in 1921, there were as many as 560,000 Russians living in Germany. By 1925, that number had decreased to 250,000, of which only 80,000 were actually Russian; the vast majority were Poles.

Paris possessed both political importance as the capital of a continental superpower hostile to Soviet rule, and traditional appeal as a center of Western intellectual and artistic life. The trend toward consolidation of Russia Abroad in France peaked in 1924; while the German mark did eventually stabilize, the devaluation of the French franc and the chaotic economic and political environment in Germany encouraged the exiled intelligentsia's migration from Berlin to Paris. As France had been an ally to Russia in WWI, it held political precedence over Germany in the eyes of many Russian émigrés, and upheld that advantage in the wake of the Revolution in its efforts to ensure

the Bolshevik defeat, including the evacuation of the defeated White Army. In addition, the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 allowed a political environment in which the displaced émigrés were able to achieve visibility by lobbying the world powers, increasing their attention to the realities of what was occurring in Russia.

The political spectrum of Russia Abroad varied between its centers in Berlin and Paris. Before its precipitous decline, Berlin's Russian community was larger than that in Paris, but it was also less ideologically defined. Besides those fleeing Lenin's regime, Russian Berlin counted a large number of people escaping civil war privations, reuniting with family, or leaving the countries newly formed on the periphery of the defunct Russian empire. Its proximity to the Russian border made it a refuge of convenience rather than an ideological destination. Paris was far more complex due to the presence of a vast array of ideologies in opposition to the new Soviet state: from the Mensheviks who founded the 1917 provisional government, to the monarchists whom they had overthrown.

The vast majority of White Russian émigrés left their home with the firm conviction that they would return as soon as their country had been liberated from the Bolshevik usurpers. In exile, the various political groups prepared themselves for assuming power in post-Bolshevik Russia. Several uncoordinated attempts were made by these different sects of former Russian peoples to create varying political bodies that would represent the Russian people abroad, and to work out concrete solutions for the country's future political organization. In late 1918, a Russian political conference was convened in Paris, with the goal of representing Russian interests. Yet there was irreconcilable antagonism between the left-wing (socialist) and the right-wing



(monarchist) groups among those present, ruining all subsequent attempts to create a broadly representative organ of anti-Bolshevik forces.

In the meantime, the course of events in Russia made the émigrés' hopes of a rapid return ever more distant, and their discussion of Russia's future political organization ever more irrelevant. In November 1920, the White Army suffered its last major defeat. The final defeat of General Wrangel's Crimean forces, which signified the loss of the last acre of Russian soil under White control, sent a shockwave through the Russian émigré community; in the following months the Soviet regime would consolidate its support, both at home and abroad, forcing the émigrés to reexamine their course of action against the Soviet regime and to consider their own isolation moving forward.

On December 15, 1921 a decree was issued by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, stating that all émigrés who did not seek Soviet citizenship by June 1, 1922 would be deprived of their Russian citizenship. As hopes for a rapid return to a liberated Russia dwindled, the émigrés became increasingly concerned about what would happen to them if the Soviet regime did not fall, or at least not for many years. For the exiled cultural elite, the choice to leave Germany for France, rather than for Soviet Russia, was a political declaration. They attempted to deny the Soviet Union's legitimacy by ignoring the calls for citizenship from the Soviets and by moving to a nation that had condemned the Revolution and now stood strongly as anti-Soviet: France.

In the modern experience of exile, the Russian émigré intelligentsia set many precedents. Not only were they the first chronologically, but also the largest numerically, and the most ideologically diverse of the cultural elites forced into exile by the political

crises of interwar Europe. After leaving Russia, the émigrés settled mainly in Berlin and Paris, where they established independent communities while striving to define their Russian identity in these new conditions. In the process, the Russians also engaged with their host communities in many capacities. Recent scholarship has established the thriving exchange between the Russian émigrés and their host countries, particularly at the artistic and political level, but that exchange was thought for decades to be minimal.

The émigrés themselves also did little to elaborate on their true experience with their host nations. Émigré historians starting with Gleb Struve, the author of the seminal study of Russian literature and journalism in exile, remained silent about the exiled intelligentsia's interaction with its host cultures. A similar silence was maintained by émigré memoirists.<sup>8</sup> These writers have promoted the idea of Russia Abroad as a self-sufficient cultural identity, but that is not the case. Ultimately the mythology of a culturally isolated Russian community supported the image the émigré intelligentsia held of itself, reflecting a traditional Russian view of artists and intellectuals as prophets and martyrs. Meaningful involvement with a foreign culture could therefore be viewed as a liability, which would force these cultural elites to abandon their status as persecuted and persevering artists and reveal a far less heroic reality.

And yet, by remaining silent on the reality of the interaction between Russian guests and their hosts, it allowed for tropes to be formed in the Western imagination, both founded in and exaggerated by reality. For instance, the main topical contribution of the Russian émigrés to French life to many of the period was manning Parisian taxis, which the Russians did in such inordinate numbers that numerous writers mentioned the

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<sup>8</sup> Livak, *Russian Émigrés in Interwar France*, 4.

phenomenon. It is for this reason that Bounine in both *Anastasia* (1954) and *Anya* (1965) is himself a taxi driver, a well established trope of the mid-twentieth century, particularly for a French playwright such as Marcelle Maurette who wrote the original 1951 play. This trope conveyed to Guy Bolton's 1954 translation of Maurette's play, and established Bounine within the confines of this stereotype for years to come.

### *The Nobles and the Monarchists*

Amongst the cultural elite of Russia Abroad remained the surviving members of the Romanov family, their (usually distant) relatives and close supporters, albeit in numbers that had dwindled a great deal due to the efforts of the Bolsheviks.<sup>9</sup> The Romanov Dynasty had lasted just over three hundred years, and the Bolsheviks would have had good reasons to fear the reality of a legitimate heir abroad. After all, they did act decisively to reduce the possibility: the slaughter of the Romanovs neither began nor ended with the tsar's immediate family. Indeed, the first Romanov to die after Lenin seized power was Grand Duke Nicholas Constantinovich. The second Romanov murdered was Nicholas II's younger brother, Grand Duke Michael, three days before the murders in Yekaterinburg. In the remaining months of 1918, ten more Romanovs were killed under similarly terrible circumstances.

By 1919, the largest concentration of Romanov survivors was in the Crimea, where a cluster of family summer palaces provided familiar refuge. The tsar's mother, Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna (Anastasia's "Grandmama"), was at the Imperial

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<sup>9</sup> This information regarding the specific experience of the former nobility and the rest of the Romanov family stems from Massie, "The Romanov Emigres" in *The Romanovs: The Final Chapter*, 225–282.

Palace of Livadia. Nearly fifteen other Romanovs resided nearby, waiting for an uncertain future. In April 1919, King George V of England sent the British war ship, the HMS *Marlborough*, to rescue the Dowager Empress, his aunt on his mother's side. Yet Maria Feodorovna would not leave her family and their households behind. Her refusal resulted in the successful negotiation for the inclusion of the entire Romanov family staying in Yalta, including their servants, and many other Russians who expressed a desire to leave. From there the Dowager Empress returned to her native Denmark (notably *not* Paris, as depicted in the 1956, 1997, and 2017 adaptations of *Anastasia*), where her nephew, Christian X, was King. Other scions of the Romanov family escaped via the Caucasus mountains, south and into Persia, and others still traveled via the northern route, through Finland.

In the coming years, the surviving monarchs were reluctant to assume a terrible fate for Nicholas and his family.<sup>10</sup> The Dowager Empress, for one, refused to accept the possibility of her family's deaths for the rest of her life (she died in 1928), ignoring any and all evidence that pointed to that eventuality. Yet despite her convictions, factions began to form amongst the surviving nobility as to who would be the rightful successor, assuming that the Bolsheviks fell and the monarchy returned to power. Ultimately three primary candidates emerged: Grand Duke Cyril Vladimirovich, Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, and Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich. Yet while the latter two never showed any interest in succession, Grand Duke Cyril certainly did, proclaiming himself "curator of the throne" in 1922, and then "Emperor of all the Russias" in 1924.<sup>11</sup> Had Anastasia survived, she would have been ineligible for the throne herself, but her hypothetical son

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<sup>10</sup> While the Bolsheviks announced Nicholas's death, the fate of his family was kept under strict secrecy.

<sup>11</sup> Massie, *The Romanovs*, 262.

would be first in line. That is one reason so many former nobles flocked to the aid of Anna Anderson when she first appeared in Berlin, because she could have been a direct line back to the monarchy in Russia.

### Anna Anderson

Pulled from the Landwehr Canal by Berlin police officers after her failed suicide attempt on February 27, 1920, an unknown woman was brought to Dalldorf Asylum with a silent refusal to identify herself, which doctors and nurses took for memory loss. Soon known as "Madame Unknown" (the first of many pseudonyms of Anna Anderson), said nothing at all for six months, though many took note of her aloof demeanor, the strange scars on her body, and the Russian accent that emerged when she did eventually speak.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, European newspapers reported strange rumors out of Russia: one of the royal daughters may have escaped the basement alive. Another patient, Clara Peuthert, was the first to suspect that this mysterious woman could be the escaped Grand Duchess. Peuther's initial thought was that the woman was the second oldest Grand Duchess, Tatiana, not Anastasia, and she managed to convince many who had interactions with the Romanovs to attend the unnamed woman to pass their judgment. Slowly but surely, the word began to spread, and while she never verbally named herself in those early days, visitors used a list of the daughters to persuade the unknown woman to reveal herself as Anastasia.

It certainly cannot be said that Anna Anderson was the lone Romanov impersonator, although she is certainly the best known. There were at least four other

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<sup>12</sup> The seminal study on Anna Anderson, of which this summary is based, is Wilson and King, *The Resurrection of the Romanovs*.

women who came forward as Anastasia, a handful claiming to be the tsar's other daughters, Olga, Tatiana, and Maria, and seven men who claimed to be the Tsarevich Alexei. Yet perhaps as the youngest daughter, and certainly as a symbol, having Anastasia be the potential survivor captured the imagination of hopeful émigrés and curious Americans and Europeans in a way the other pretenders could not. The same could be said for Anna Anderson, whose variable moods, tendency to isolation, and intimate knowledge of the events in Yekaterinburg made her as much of a fascinating individual as the woman she claimed to be.

Through the years, many of the remaining royal family, Russian émigrés, and members of the American artistic community came to believe Anderson's story and supported her claim to the throne, despite the fact that she did not speak Russian, and had no substantial evidence to prove her identity. Financially supported by Russian émigrés desperate to believe her tale, she was bounced around between Europe and the United States in her quest for legitimacy. Her attempts to legally pursue recognition even resulted in the longest court case in German history, which ultimately ended in 1970 when German courts ruled that Anderson had not provided sufficient evidence to prove she was a Romanov. The one person she openly longed to meet, the Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna, never acknowledged her presence or agreed to meet with her, and died in 1928 still convinced that the entire Romanov family still lived, kept prisoner by the Bolsheviks.

Anderson ultimately married a history professor at the University of Virginia and died in Charlottesville in 1984. Seven years later, after the discovery of the first mass grave outside Yekaterinburg, her DNA was cross-checked against the discovered Romanov remains, and it was proven that she had not been Anastasia after all. Instead, it

was proven that she was Franziska Schanzkowska, a Polish factory worker who had been declared insane following a head injury caused by an explosion at the factory in which she was employed. The members of the royal family who had doubted her claims while she still lived had launched an investigation into Anna Anderson's real identity while she was living in Germany, resulting in many German exposés on the matter, and leading to that being the general identity connected to her. Yet Schanzkowska's family never officially recognized her, as by then the Nazis had come to power in Germany, and planned to arrest Anderson if her family named her. When she was proven to not be a Romanov, Anderson's DNA was then cross-checked with a modern relative of Schanzkowska, and it was a familial match. Despite all evidence, however, the legend has lived on long after the validity of Anderson and all other imposter claims was banished forever.

### *The Evolving Anastasia Adaptations*

Anna Anderson's story, the myth of Anastasia's supposed escape, and the reality of the Romanov family's fate have all inspired numerous artistic retellings. The earliest known adaptation of the tale was *Clothes Make the Woman*, a 1928 silent film that loosely depicted Anna Anderson who visited the US in the same year for the first time. From then on there have been dozens of variations on both Anastasia and the other Romanovs, including literature, drama, theater, and film.<sup>13</sup> In this study, I focus on a particular family of adaptations that stem from the 1951 play *Anastasia* by French playwright, Marcelle Maurette (1903–1972) that share a particular approach to the story's

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<sup>13</sup> Lovell, *Anastasia: The Lost Princess*, 471.

narrative. My analysis begins with the English translation of the play by Guy Bolton, which premiered on Broadway in 1954, and tracks the four subsequent adaptations. These five adaptations can be divided into two categories: 1) those created prior to the discovery of the Romanov remains, which are far more centered around the plot of the original play, and 2) and those that were written after the discovery of the Romanov grave sites, which depart further from history. While I will explore these adaptations in detail in the following chapters, here I will briefly outline their history, beginning with the original play; enumerate major plot changes from one adaptation to the next as their shared narrative evolved; and establish a working comparison between the earlier and the later group of adaptations.

Set in Berlin in 1926, Maurette's original play tells the tale of a suicidal amnesiac named Anna, who is being exploited by former Russian prince, and now taxi driver and conman, Bounine, in an attempt to claim the rumored Romanov "rainy-day" fortune.<sup>14</sup> This fortune was allegedly placed in a British bank by Nicholas II as he attempted to secure his family's escape—a fortune and bank account that would prove to be nothing more than a persistent rumor. In the opening scene, the audience learns that prior to the beginning of the play, Bounine had found Anna Broun in Dallsdorf Hospital (instead of the historically accurate Dalldorf Asylum, which implies a mental illness that the play is perhaps intending to downplay), where she had claimed to be the daughter of Nicholas II. After Bounine had promised to help her find her family, and told the entire Russian émigré community that he had found the lost Grand Duchess, she fled the hospital out of fear and lack of trust. The play begins when Bounine's henchmen scramble to inform him

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<sup>14</sup> Guy Bolton and Marcelle Maurette, *Anastasia*, (New York: Samuel French Inc., 1954).



that the émigrés who had given Bounine money (to fund his efforts to prove her claim) are coming to collect and investigate their investment. Luckily Bounine announces that they will be spared the retribution for his lies because he has rediscovered Anna wandering along the Landwehr canal. From then on Bounine – along with his associates, Chernov, Petrovin, Varya, and Sergei – trains Anna in the ways of the Russian nobility, regardless of the fact that she cannot speak Russian. Despite her captors' belief that she is nothing but a fraud, there are moments where she remembers intimate details of Anastasia's life that only a family member would know, such as the family's private nickname for Catherine the Great ("Figgy") and an argument between the Dowager Empress and Tsarina Alexandra over an emerald necklace.<sup>15</sup> This ambiguity leads the audience to sympathize with her, and wonder whether she might be the Anastasia Bounine is pretending she is.

The ultimate goal for Bounine and his associates is for Anna to be granted an audience with the Grand Empress Maria to convince the aging woman of Anna's true identity as Anastasia. As the Dowager Empress is in Berlin visiting her grandnephew, Prince Paul, there is very little time to prepare Anna for the potential meeting. The men quickly begin training Anna in the ways of royalty, as well as reinforcing the story of how she came to be in Berlin in the first place. To build up to the Dowager Empress, Bounine introduces Anna to witnesses who had known or seen Anastasia prior to the murder of her and her family, and she manages to convince each in turn that she is who she says she is.

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<sup>15</sup> Bolton and Maurette, *Anastasia* (1954), 51.

The only missteps occur when Anna endures two separate confrontations, the first by Dr. Michael Serensky, and the second by the Dowager Empress Maria, who—despite Bounine’s attempts to defraud—is firmly convinced that Anna is nothing but a fake. Dr. Serensky had been working in the hospital in Bucharest after escaping the Soviet secret police when Anna arrived with severe injuries following a factory explosion. As she recovered and began to help Serensky with his work, the two had fallen in love. Yet her continued anxiety over her forgotten past, and Serensky’s intense love for her, had caused her to flee. With her lack of memory and her continued delusions, she had landed in the Dallsdorf hospital where Bounine found her. While Serensky begs her to return with him and stop this charade, she has come to believe that she is in fact Anastasia, and cannot go with him. After all, she is soon to be engaged to Prince Paul, her supposed childhood sweetheart.

The “recognition scene” between Anna and the Dowager Empress Maria is perhaps the best-known moment of the play. Determined to oust Anna as a fraud, the Empress dismisses all of Anna’s attempts to prove herself. It is only when Anna recalls the aforementioned emerald necklace; the Empress’ nickname for her, “Malenkaia”; and an incident aboard the tsar’s yacht, the *Standart*, that the Dowager Empress relents and tearfully accepts Anna as Anastasia. The trauma of the memories coming back causes Anna’s Russian to return as well, and Bounine and Paul rejoice at the success of the meeting. Yet after the return of Dr. Serensky, an unsatisfactory exchange with Paul in which Anna asks him not to claim the Romanov fortune after they are wed and he refuses, and a heartwarming conversation with the Dowager Empress, Anna makes the decision to flee in the moments before she is officially acknowledged before the

overwhelming crowd of Russian émigrés. Likely returning to Dr. Serensky, she forges a new identity, content in the knowledge of who she truly is, but denying Bounine the pleasure of securing the money he used her for, and leaving the mystery unsolved.

*Anastasia* proved popular in France, first in its brief 1951 run, and then in its successful 1955–1956 revival.<sup>16</sup> Guy Bolton (1884–1979), the British-American playwright famous for his contributions to musical theater in the first half of the twentieth century, discovered *Anastasia* and collaborated with Maurette to create an English translation almost immediately after the play’s publication, which toured briefly around Europe. After a run in London in 1953, it was brought to Broadway in late 1954, where it faced similarly enthusiastic audiences. At the time Maurette was writing *Anastasia*, Anna Anderson was living in seclusion at her German estate in Unterlengenhardt, and the playwright believed her protagonist to be dead. She was incredibly surprised to receive a letter from Anderson claiming damages for representing her story without compensation. Taken aback by the discovery of her survival, Bolton and Maurette quickly added Anderson to their play’s rights, and the show was allowed to continue.<sup>17</sup>

The Maurette-Bolton collaboration also became the source for the first successful on-screen adaptation of the Anastasia myth. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox studio president Darryl F. Zanuck purchased the rights to *Anastasia* shortly after the Broadway premiere of the play, and spared no expense in catapulting the movie, labeled a “Technicolor Epic,” into immediate production.<sup>18</sup> Zanuck brought in the famed director and anti-Soviet Ukrainian

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<sup>16</sup> For more on the production history of *Anastasia*, see Amnon Kabatchnik, “Anastasia (1951)” in *Blood on the Stage, 1950–1975: Milestone Plays of Crime, Mystery, and Detection* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2011).

<sup>17</sup> King and Wilson, *Resurrection*, 204–205.

<sup>18</sup> Knollmueller contextualizes the reception and production history of the 1956 film in “Anastasia(s),” 4–5.

émigré Anatole Litvak, American playwright and screenwriter Arthur Laurents, and the contemporary film and stage idol Yul Brynner, fresh off of the set of *The King and I*. Yet the largest question centered around who would play the leading lady, a tragic, unwitting femme fatale. For Zanuck there was only one choice, and he set about wooing Ingrid Bergman back to Hollywood, seven years after she had been systematically dethroned and exiled for having an extramarital affair with Italian director Roberto Rossellini. Her return was perfectly fitting for the role of Anastasia, and the publicity certainly did not hurt the film's chances. It also made for a great pairing between Brynner and Bergman, as Arthur Laurents took the relationship between Anna and Bounine a step forward, developing a romance between the two, eliminating the character of Dr. Serensky, and allowing a different pair of lovers to flee together at the end of the film.

While both Maurette's play and Bolton's translation had taken place in a series of rooms in Bounine's Berlin apartments, the transition to film (and its lavish three-million-dollar budget) afforded screenwriters the opportunity to take their narrative outdoors and even expand it geographically. The 1956 film adaptation therefore took place in Paris and Copenhagen—a more historically accurate setting for meeting the Dowager Empress—and was filmed on locations there and in London. Yet despite its new setting, the plot reads very similarly to its previous version, once again avoiding any kind of engagement with the culture of the setting, whether it be Germany, France, or Denmark. The film garnered two Academy Award nominations and proved very successful at the box office, both of which were unusual for a movie featuring Russian characters at the heart of the Second Red Scare.

The final adaptation staged prior to the discovery of the Romanov remains was

*Any*, an operetta that premiered at the Ziegfeld Theatre in New York City on November 1965.<sup>19</sup> This was the first musical adaptation of the *Anastasia* narrative, which would inform the remaining 1997 and 2017 adaptations. In addition to the inclusion of music, the plot was altered slightly from the original play and 1956 film. While the 1956 film version of *Anastasia* already transformed the tale into a love affair between Anna and Bounine, *Any* attempted to develop that relationship even further. Set once again in Berlin, *Any* included a love triangle between Bounine, Anya, and Bounine's mistress, Genia, a German Countess. As Bounine falls out of love with Genia and into love with Anya, Anya fails to see this change of heart and grows jealous, intentionally sabotaging the scheme in order to seek revenge on Bounine.<sup>20</sup> This change comes across as petty and childish, sabotaging Anya's traditionally tragic character from the previous two adaptations.

In addition, all of the characters from previous *Anastasia* adaptations were significantly rewritten for *Any*. For instance, the Dowager Empress is portrayed as a decrepit woman with a failing mind, so while she accepts Anya as Anastasia, the conspirators recognize that the Dowager Empress' word now means nothing. These changes, with seemingly no true purpose, result in surprisingly wooden narrative from Guy Bolton and George Abbott. Along with poorly written dialogue, *Any* embraced the traditional European operetta genre instead of the more modern (and American) musical, and therefore could not escape the label of "old-fashioned" by an overwhelming number of critics. After just sixteen performances, it closed for good. While there have been attempts to revise and revive *Any* over the years, including the most recent *The*

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<sup>19</sup> Mandelbaum, *Not Since Carrie*, 235–236.

<sup>20</sup> Bolton and Abbot, *Any* (1965).

*Anastasia Affair: The Rachmaninoff Musical* (1992) and *Anastasia: The Musical* (1998), it continues to fall flat.<sup>21</sup>

These first three versions are drastically different from the two that follow them. While there are certainly differences among the two *Anastasias* (1954 and 1956) and *Anya* (1965), their similarities far outweigh their differences. For instance, they all center on the European émigré community, and attempt to represent Anna Anderson's early biography after attempting to commit suicide in the Berlin canal. While Anya's love interest changes between the three renditions, she always rises above the expectations of the entire émigré community, is accepted by the Dowager Empress, engaged to Prince Paul, and ultimately runs away from her identity as Anastasia. As the next adaptation would not be released until 1997, separating *Anya* and *Anastasia* by just over 30 years, it would have been far stranger for the 1997 to identically represent the previous versions. After all, American culture was nowhere near what it had been during the peak of the Cold War. While I will explore many key differences as I present the plots of the remaining two adaptations, the most important distinctions between the first three adaptations and the last two are the addition of a Russian setting, the removal of Bounine and Prince Paul (along with other character changes), and brand new villains.

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russian settings suddenly became a viable option for those interested in situating the beginning of the Anastasia tale in the early Soviet Union, signaling a change in attitude in the United States, a renewed interest in Russia, and the expanded opportunity to travel there. Arguably the best-known, most popular, and most often dismissed of *Anastasia* adaptations is the 1997 animated film of

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<sup>21</sup> Mandelbaum, 235–236.

the same name. With Anna Anderson discredited due to DNA testing in the mid-1990s, and details of the execution revealed by the 1990s, the animated film produced by 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox relied heavily on pre-established Disney tropes to create a fantastical narrative little related to historical facts, essentially abandoning Anna Anderson's biography entirely.<sup>22</sup> The Anya of this film has little in common with her broken, lost predecessors, while the ideological struggle engendered by the Russian Revolution and the tensions of the émigré experience were removed from the plot and replaced with a colorful and impossibly unrealistic villain: Grigori Rasputin.

The tale begins in St. Petersburg in 1916 at the Catherine Palace south of St. Petersburg, where the Romanovs are celebrating the Romanov Tercentenary, the 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Romanov dynasty (which was historically celebrated in 1913, not 1916). While at the party, the Dowager Empress makes a promise to the young Grand Duchess Anastasia to take her to Paris, presenting Anastasia with a music box and a necklace that opens it. Before the promise can be fulfilled, the party comes to an abrupt halt at the hands of Rasputin, who is portrayed as a terrifying, ghoul-like man, who sells his soul to the devil to seek revenge on Nicholas and his family for some unnamed slight. After Rasputin promises the family's demise, he sends evil demons to provoke the Russian Revolution, and revolutionaries storm the palace to murder the entire royal family. In the chaos, a young kitchen boy saves Anastasia and the Dowager Empress by leading them out through the servant quarters, but the young Anastasia is separated from her grandmother during the escape attempt, and hits her head, losing her memory; she remains in Russia, while the Dowager Empress succeeds in leaving the country.

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<sup>22</sup> Bluth and Goldman, *Anastasia* (1997).

The plot then leaps ahead ten years to an industrial St. Petersburg in 1926, where there are whispers that Anastasia survived the murder of the royal family. Two conmen, Dimitri and Vlad, hatch a plan to hold auditions for Anastasia look-alikes in order to claim the Dowager Empress' ten-million-ruble reward for the return of her granddaughter—a plot device that echoes the hidden/rumored Romanov fortune of the previous adaptations. Incidentally, Dimitri and Vlad are portrayed as far more lovable than the severe, cruel Bounine and his associates, particularly as it becomes apparent towards the end of the film that Dimitri was the boy who had once saved Anastasia and the Dowager Empress' lives.

The focus of the narrative then transitions to the spunky, amnesiac orphan Anya, who is wearing the necklace that the Dowager Empress gave to Anastasia, which says “Together in Paris.” Using Paris as the only clue to finding her true family, she elects to go to St. Petersburg to catch a train to Paris, which of course she cannot do without fake papers that only Dimitri can provide. Thus Anya meets Dimitri and Vlad, who see the opportunity to use her to claim the Dowager Empress' reward, and quickly whisk her away to Paris. In addition to the “princess lessons” she's given along the entire journey, a distinct similarity to the original adaptations, she's forced to avoid magical attempts to end her life and fulfill the Romanov curse carried out by Rasputin, who is revealed to be a living corpse living beneath the surface of the earth, unable to “move on” due to the unfulfilled tenets of his curse. Once in Paris, all her prayers are answered: the Dowager Empress' cousin, Sophie, dresses her in extravagant French clothing; she is reunited with her “grandmama”; vanquishes Rasputin in a final showdown; and then surrenders her



new-found identity for love by running away with Dimitri, clearly a more appealing leading man than Bounine of the earlier adaptations.

As Disney made its move to Broadway with the premiere of the staged version of *The Lion King* in 1997, which featured the original elements of the film with expanded plot points and new songs,<sup>23</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox began to investigate the possibility of creating a staged version of *Anastasia*. Yet it was not until the 2012 that they began to move forward with the proposed musical, hiring the songwriting team of the 1997 film, Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens, to craft an updated retelling of *Anastasia* with a book by seasoned Broadway playwright, Terrence McNally.<sup>24</sup> While Disney Broadway renditions like *The Lion King* and *Beauty and the Beast* were largely recreations of the animated films that inspired them, the 2017 *Anastasia* is a distinct, new adaptation, not just a staged version of the film.

Taking the lead from popular new history-based Broadway musicals such as *Hamilton*, the show-writers worked to craft a historically grounded tale. A prologue is added in 1906 when the Dowager Empress and a young Anastasia make their promise to go to Paris, before the time shifts to 1917 and Anastasia emerges, this time 17.<sup>25</sup> The Revolution is still drastically oversimplified, represented by a solitary scene called “The Last Dance of the Romanovs,” which transforms a swirling waltz scene to a chaotic vision of explosions, soldiers, and red. The scene ends with a devastated Dowager Empress reading a telegram, announcing that all of the family was killed. By removing

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<sup>23</sup> Leigh Schepps, “‘The Lion King’ Turns 20: How the Disney Musical Became One of Broadway’s Best,” *ET*, November 10, 2017.

<sup>24</sup> Linda Buchwald, “‘Anastasia,’ All Grown Up With Somewhere to Go,” *American Theatre*, June 3, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> I craft this show summary based on a full and comprehensive reading of McNally, *Anastasia* (2017).

Rasputin and presenting the Revolution as a military coup, this adaptation introduces the Soviet Union as a large plot point for the very first time.

When the plot resumes in Leningrad, formerly known as St. Petersburg, this time in 1927, audiences are introduced Gleb Vaganov, a Soviet official rising up the ranks. He serves as the main villain throughout the musical, chasing Anya from Russia to Paris, attempting to persuade her to give up this game. Anya herself becomes a synthesis of the tragic heroine from the earlier productions and the strong-willed teenager from the 1997 film, making the evolution of a love triangle between Dmitry, Gleb, and Anya slightly more realistic as she struggles through the horrors of her past to find her future. Gleb's journey to Paris gives show writers the opportunity to contrast the Soviet lifestyle against the monarchist émigré community. While the community was largely glossed-over in the animated film, despite a small glimpse when Anya briefly accepts her place as Anastasia in Paris, numerous musical numbers, such as "Land of Yesterday," are dedicated to the Russian nobles and monarchists living in Paris.

Despite the show's veneer of historical accuracy, this new production is still largely ahistorical, blending favorite moments of the animated film into an accessible and commercial performance for tourists and fans ("Fanastasias") alike.<sup>26</sup> The changing emphasis on a Soviet villain, a thriving and nostalgic émigré community, and a stronger and lifelike Anya in the most recent production presents the three most logical threads to trace from the 1954 play to the present day, largely because of their deviation from history. By creating new narratives that grow further away from the history of Russia, the Russian émigrés, and Anna Anderson, all of which were established in this chapter, each

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<sup>26</sup> Cox, "How Broadway's 'Anastasia' Discovered Its Sweeping Fanbase."

of the adaptations reveal the reality of American expectations through the way the content of each adaptation navigates history and myth.

## Chapter 2:

### “I’ll Bless My Homeland ‘til I Die”: Anastasia the Immigrant

In the months and years following the Revolution, some 900,000 to two million Russians left their homeland, never to return.<sup>1</sup> Families splintered as many made the decision to leave, while those that chose to remain inevitably faced the realities of the Soviet state. As discussed, many émigrés were members of the former aristocracy, who sensed the coming civil war and the changing tides, but refugees ultimately spanned all social classes and occupations, including the intelligentsia, the military, the imperial government, and the Russian Orthodox Church. They fled before and during the civil war, and particularly as it became clear that the White Army would not be victorious against the Red. As the dust of the civil war settled in the early 1920s, escape became nearly impossible as the Bolsheviks moved to secure the borders; all forms of travel were monitored within cities and towns, let alone abroad. By the time Joseph Stalin rose to power in 1924, leaving the country for the great majority of the Russians would have been out of the question.

As the émigrés waited for the opportunity to return to Russia after the defeat of the Red Army—a future that would never come—they established communities in multiple European cities, as well as many in the United States. As discussed in the previous chapter, Berlin and Paris, each for a time the capital for the White émigrés, provide an accurately depicted setting for the first three *Anastasia* adaptations considered here. By excluding Russia from the first three adaptations, the tales align most closely

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<sup>1</sup> Livak, *Russian Émigrés in Interwar France*, 6–9.

with Anna Anderson's biography, and allow for an unresolved mystery that has far less overt clues than the latter adaptations. The last two productions, however, set the first half of the story in Russia, before moving the action to Paris. This allows for Anya's identity as Anastasia to be far more concrete, for the audience sees her supposed "death" and resurrection from start to finish. Yet with the Russian setting, any professed attempt at historical accuracy begins to falter. To begin with, leaving the Soviet Union in either 1926 (as in the 1997 film) or 1927 (the 2017 musical) would have been largely impossible, whether the ragtag trio of Anya, Dmitry, and Vlad had fake papers or not. As for shifting the narrative to Paris, it does reflect the migration of the Russian émigrés from Berlin to Paris also seen in the 1956 film. However, the 1954 play and its contemporaneous adaptations aim to portray the overwhelming longing for the motherland evidently felt by the historical White Russian communities, serving as artistic representations of the theoretical concepts of "long-distance nationalism" and "the myth of return." The plots of the 1997 and 2017 adaptations, on the other hand, privilege an assimilation narrative absent in the earlier adaptations—a change related as much to the evolution of the ideas and practices of long-distance nationalism and homeland nostalgia as to the newly developed concerns in the US regarding the potential for conflicting loyalties among these American citizens.

Building on my general overview of the émigré experience and the monarchist faction in Berlin and Paris offered in Chapter 1, the majority of this chapter will explore and contextualize historical fallacies evident in the adaptations through the theoretical concepts of long-distance nationalism, homeland nostalgia, and the conflicting narratives of the American concept of the "melting pot." The goal of this exploration is to illustrate

how each new rendition of *Anastasia* embeds itself ever deeper within the contradictory discourse of assimilation and cultural pluralism in the United States, while departing ever farther from the reality of the White Russian immigration.

### *Long-Distance Nationalism*

Each of these five adaptations uses the monarchists and émigrés in some capacity of their corresponding plots. It is therefore necessary to reiterate two key characteristics of identity politics among large diasporas: long-distance nationalism and the myth of return. In this section, I will turn first to long-distance nationalism, transitioning to the homeland nostalgia in the next. Long-distance nationalists are members of migrant groups who involve themselves in activities meant to influence the political situation within a territory that they still consider home, even if they do not physically occupy it. While long-distance nationalists experience as much of an intense nostalgia for the “homeland” as do migrant populations in general, they take it a step further by actually participating and being a part of that “homeland” from afar, to varying degrees of success. National borders are not thought to prohibit membership in the nation, and the members of the nation may live anywhere around the globe and even hold citizenship in other countries.<sup>2</sup>

White Russians are considered a “diaspora” in multiple capacities, based on the work of social scientist and diaspora scholar Zlatko Skrbish.<sup>3</sup> He argues that while a diaspora population may result from the disappearance of a homeland from the world political map, or be a consequence of social or political upheaval, it is not a requirement

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<sup>2</sup> Schiller, “Long Distance Nationalism,” 356–360.

<sup>3</sup> Skrbish, *Long Distance Nationalism*, 1–10.

for its classification. Skrbiš also argues that long-distance nationalism develops only if an emigrant population contains a critical mass of political exiles. Such a grouping of exiles works to promote identification with their homeland in the face of political and financial losses that resulted from their dispersion. Whatever social standing they are able to maintain in their new land depends on building a political constituency abroad and keeping at the forefront their common goal of returning home to political power and social position. The White Russians resulted from Imperial Russia “disappearing” from the world political map, and a vast majority of them belonged to the political factions at odds with the Bolsheviks. The monarchists and surviving nobles in particular continued to organize themselves around various “successors,” continuing to build their identity as Russians and promote themselves as such, with the ultimate goal of returning to Russia and rebuilding the monarchy.

This tenet of diaspora studies is prominently maintained in the first three adaptations of *Anastasia*, where the characters that represent the surviving nobility are determined to maintain power and funds in order to prepare themselves for the inevitable return. Grand Duke Cyril’s lifelong efforts to reinstate the Russian monarchy are echoed in the character of Prince Paul, Anastasia’s supposed childhood sweetheart, in the early *Anastasia* adaptations. While Bounine is far more interested in Anastasia’s Romanov inheritance, Paul is also interested in the power and the reality of a marriage to the last surviving daughter of Nicholas II. Paul was not an actual historical figure, but his description as the Dowager Empress’s grandnephew (in *Anya*, her cousin) positions him as a stand-in for Grand Duke Cyril. For *Anastasia*’s Prince Paul, an equal marriage would have meant far more than an inheritance.

As Prince Paul states in the original play, “Money means power. One day a crisis may arise in Russia and they will want us back.”<sup>4</sup> And while Bounine is justified in accusing Paul of greed, money and power were complementary goals in the eyes of the White Russian nobility. Power and prestige certainly made life abroad more comfortable, but its purpose was never to simply ensure a plush life beyond Russian borders, but to establish a line of support when the time came to return. When news of Anya’s potential identity as Anastasia is first discovered amongst the Russian émigrés in *Anya*, they scramble to fund her care in order to link their standing to hers. While there is certainly emotion displayed by those characters who legitimately believe—or wish to believe—the possibility of Anastasia’s survival, there are just as many who are willing to aid her even while skeptical of her claims, because it is a chance for them to increase their own status.

While long-distance nationalism is not a new phenomenon, the term first became prominent in social science literature beginning in the 1990s, primarily through the work of Benedict Anderson.<sup>5</sup> Earlier, scholars sometimes used the term “home country nationalism” to describe the continuing political participation of certain nineteenth and twentieth century immigrants in nationalist projects in their “original” homeland.<sup>6</sup> The US government mobilized those communities to support pro-United States forces, and both Democrats and Republicans courted political support during the first thirty years of the Cold War by fanning the long-distance nationalism of migrants from the countries that had become socialist. Immigrants from portions of the Soviet Union and the Soviet

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<sup>4</sup> Bolton and Maurette, *Anastasia* (1954), 50.

<sup>5</sup> See Anderson, “The new world disorder,” 2–13; Anderson, “Exodus,” 314–327; and Anderson, *The Spectre of Comparisons*, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Schiller, “Long Distance Nationalism,” 577.



Bloc were organized in the United States under the umbrella of “oppressed nations.”<sup>7</sup>

After the end of the Cold War, some immigrants and their descendants returned from the United States, Canada, and Australia to participate in the political processes of these reconstituted or newly constituted states, even if temporarily.

It is not surprising, then, that American audiences during the Cold War would understand and relate to its long-distance nationalism, which the US government had propagated amongst its populace, immigrant and American alike.<sup>8</sup> This shared loyalty would generally have been understood, particularly as refugees and émigrés continued to be portrayed as victims of the Soviet regime, waiting for the distant day when they might be able to return to the motherland. Yet this point of view, common as it was in the 1950–60s, does not seem to have survived the twentieth century. The 1997 *Anastasia* already foreshadows this shift in popular opinion on immigration and immigrants, as it turns to a narrative of assimilation over the nostalgic longings of the historical Russia Abroad. To many present-day Americans, living in a post-9/11 world and witnessing the construction of a southern border wall, immigrants sharing loyalties between their home country and the United States seems to be a contradiction.

Many scholars—including Anderson—openly questioned the dangers of long-distance nationalism, particularly as the people espousing this ideology are known to have funded violent and extremist movements abroad.<sup>9</sup> Such questions could ultimately

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<sup>7</sup> Schiller, “Long Distance Nationalism,” 573.

<sup>8</sup> According to Schiller, she provides the example of the US government fanning immigrant sentiments and communities to support pro-US forces against the fierce armed struggle in Greece and Italy in the years following WWII. In addition, as both Democratic and Republican Parties mobilized this type of political support until the 1970s, it would seem likely that most Americans would be at least somewhat familiar with the idea of shared loyalties.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson uses the Irish-Americans funding the IRA, as well as anti-Muslim movements by Indian-Americans as his case studies.

not be ignored, particularly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. From that point on, dual loyalties of immigrants began to be reexamined in many immigrant-receiving states. While certainly there had always been conversation regarding the loyalty of immigrant populations in the United States, long-distance nationalism has less to do with subsets of immigrants within the US and much more to do with direct political involvement abroad. This is why 9/11 seems to mark this turning point over other significant events in the twentieth century. The US declaration of “war on terrorism” occurred at a point when more than 40 countries had allowed dual citizenship with the US, and long-distance nationalism was becoming a way of life. Today the United States does not formally recognize dual citizenship, yet it also has not taken any stand against it, either legally or politically. That said, while legally there have been little changes to US policy regarding dual citizenship, the “us vs. them” mentality of today’s politics has drawn social lines that have yet to become legal ones.

While the US’s domestic policy has privileged multiculturalism—the existence of distinct cultural and ethnic groups within an overarching society—over assimilation in the modern era, the problematic question of loyalty makes long-distance nationalism a liability. As the United States increases surveillance on cross-border transfers of funds, communication, and travel, applying wide generalizations across entire regions, such as the Middle East and Latin America, it is becoming increasingly difficult to have long-distance nationalism coexist alongside American nationalism, particularly when it comes to Russian-Americans.

It is for this reason that I believe all references to long-distance nationalism were eradicated from the latter two productions of *Anastasia*. By portraying Anya, Dmitry, and

Vlad as eager Francophiles, each driven by a personal and overtly apolitical reason to leave Russia, the show writers subvert the conversation regarding long-distance nationalism entirely. Although it could be argued that fleeing the Soviet regime is a political reason for leaving, Vlad and Dmitry are presented far more as money-hungry than anti-Soviet, and Anya is leaving to find her family abroad. Therefore, their personal motivations far outweigh the political ones. Even when the Dowager Empress legitimizes Anya in both the animated film and the new musical, the single consequence of her recognition is establishing an even stronger home in Paris, not an attempt to return to Russia or to challenge Soviet politics. As the Dowager Empress tells Anya after reuniting with her in the 1997 film, “[our family] would not want us to live in the past, not now that we have found each other.”<sup>10</sup> This sentiment is worlds away from Prince Paul’s earlier statement, “they will want us back.”<sup>11</sup> With no Prince Paul, émigré patrons, or Prince Bounine as Anya’s love interest in the 1997 film to remind Anastasia and her grandmama of the historical reality of émigré efforts to interfere in the developing USSR, it would appear as if the Russian nobility simply shook the dust of Russia off their boots and happily assimilated into the flowering French culture of the 1920s.

With the addition of the character of Soviet official Gleb Vaganov into the 2017 musical, the political aspect of the White Russian activities in Paris could have potentially come once more to the forefront, but it does not. According to the plot, Gleb is ordered by his superiors to bring Anya back to Russia, or to eliminate her if she refuses. However, the reason for that is a potential threat her title might pose to the Soviet regime, not due to any declared intention on her part. Indeed, during their confrontation

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<sup>10</sup> Bluth and Goldman, *Anastasia* (1997).

<sup>11</sup> Bolton and Maurette, *Anastasia* (1956), 50.

at the show's climax, Anya replies to Gleb's demand that she return home to Russia by saying: "My home is here now."<sup>12</sup> The danger her identity poses to the USSR is an imaginary one, conceived entirely by Gleb and his Soviet superiors. Anya herself has no interest in the politics of Russia, and has completely given herself over to the Western splendor of Paris.

The increasing prominence of this assimilation narrative can be seen in the evolution of the prominent song "Paris Holds the Key to Your Heart," sung by Sophie in 1997, and Vlad in 2017. While the song is present in both adaptations, the text is rewritten significantly in the latter musical. In 1997, the lyrics seem to promote a lovely Parisian holiday, but the later version depicts actual emigration and veneration of the Western city and culture:

1997:

(Sophie) Welcome, my friends, to Paris.  
Here, have a flower on me.

**Forget where you're from.**

**You're in France!** Children, come!

I'll show you that French *joie de vivre*!

...

Paris holds the key to your heart.

And all of Paris plays a part.

Just stroll two by two

Down what we call "la rue"

And soon all Paris

Will be singing to you!

...

When you're feeling blue

Come to Le Moulin.

When your heart says don't,

The French say do!

When you think you can't

You'll find you can can!

Everyone can can-can!

2017:

(Vlad) Voilà! Mes amis, here's Paris.

Now that we're here, follow me.

**Begin with the new**

As you stroll down la rue.

And soon all Paris will be singing to you.

...

Paris holds the key to your heart

And all of Paris plays a part

**Paris turned a page**

**To the new modern age!**

**And we'll do it, too, if we're smart!**

The French have it down to an art!

...

(Anya) I dreamed of a city

Beyond all compare

It's hard to believe

That I'm finally there

**At last there's a future**

**There's freedom**

**There's hope in the air!**

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<sup>12</sup> McNally, *Anastasia* (2017), 115.

Both renditions are hopeful; both fully embrace the Parisian way of life and abandon Russianness entirely. As the Act II opener in the new musical, “Paris Holds the Key” establishes the entire tone for the second act, further attaching the idea of home to Paris over Russia. While Paris certainly was a welcome refuge for historical Russian émigrés, and the émigré community did integrate with and participate in Parisian arts and society (see Chapter 1), what these productions depict is Anya and company’s complete, immediate, and willing assimilation into a Western culture. While Russian émigrés propagated the idea that they were completely isolated and did not intermingle with the culture of their host nations, this representation is the complete foil to that representation. As is often the case, historical reality falls somewhere between these two irreconcilable mythologies.

Entrenching the Parisian romanticism even further, the 2017 version moves the song “Journey to Past,” Anya’s power-ballad full of hope for her future, from her arrival in St. Petersburg to her arrival in Paris. The lyrics are identical between the two versions, but express a strong longing for home:

One step at a time  
One hope, then another  
Who knows where this road may go—  
Back to who I was  
On to find my future  
Things my heart still needs to know...

Yes! Let this be a sign  
Let this road be mine  
Let it lead me to my past  
And bring me home...at last!

While Anya is going to St. Petersburg in order to catch a train to Paris in the 1997 production, this declaration of hope and longing for home is still linked to St. Petersburg

as she sings “Journey to the Past” overlooking the now industrialized city. Yet in the 2017 musical, Anya’s story begins in St. Petersburg, and she makes no such journey to the city. Instead she only sings “Journey to the Past” as she approaches Paris prior to the end of Act I. With such a triumphant finish to the number, all longing for a Russian home is removed when the song is placed before her arrival in Paris, as seen in the parallel image of the number, with the St. Petersburg scene replaced by a Parisian one:



Fig. 1  
Anya overlooking St. Petersburg

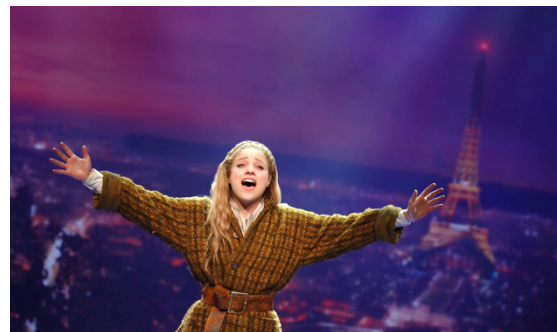


Fig. 2  
Anya overlooking Paris

By changing the setting and not the lyrics, Paris is established as Anya’s home and future, not St. Petersburg or Russia. Combined with “Paris Holds the Key,” these songs highlight her transition from East to West even more strongly, and portray her as eagerly abandoning her home in Russia, in a clear break with the historical tradition of long-distance nationalism among the White Russian émigrés.

### *Homeland Nostalgia and the “Myth of Return”*

As previously discussed, homelands are spatial representations that are influenced by political and cultural factors, rather than a simple fact of geography. As such, the

concept of homeland must be seen as a constructed and imagined set of qualifiers rather than a clearly definable entity. As stated by Croatian political writer Ivo Korsky:

The essence of the political migrant is that he...only lives in his new environment by default. Spiritually, however, he is in a dynamic relationship with his old environment. He lives in and for this old place.<sup>13</sup>

To a political migrant and especially a displaced person, the homeland is not physically accessible. It represents a forbidden fruit, an area impenetrable by any means other than the imagination. This spiritual and physical distance may increase and heighten a sense of loss.

This impossible longing directly connects with the concept of nostalgia. In its original use, and as defined by most nostalgia scholars including Skrbiš and Svetlana Boym, “nostalgia” refers to a pain related to the homeland (*nostos* means “to return home” and *algia*, “a painful condition”).<sup>14</sup> The act of conjuring an impossible vision of a former home with the help of geographical imagery is romantic and surreal, but entirely fictional. This nostalgia leads to the “myth of return,” which is a phenomenon common to various migrant groups. This myth eulogizes the homeland as an idyllic place of origin where a “pure and peaceful existence was shattered by an enemy,”<sup>15</sup> thus creating the culture of exile and the desire for restoration and return. Different groups keep this myth alive for various reasons, and whenever these reasons have to do with homeland politics, the myth is far more persistent than if it has no political connotations. The “political” migrant or a refugee cannot simply “go home,” and therefore the pull is that much stronger.

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<sup>13</sup> Ivo Korsky (1983), translation by Zlatko Skrbiš, *Long-Distance Nationalism*, 40.

<sup>14</sup> Skrbiš, *Long-Distance Nationalism*, 41 and Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, 2. Both of these sources form the foundation for my reading of homeland nostalgia as it relates to the Russian émigré community.

<sup>15</sup> Kasbarian, “The Myth and Reality of ‘Return,’” 2009, 360.

As we have seen, long-distance nationalism was depicted in the 1954 play, 1956 film, and 1965 operetta but excluded from the latter two productions. The same is true of the myth of return. All the adaptations depict very strong sentiments of homeland nostalgia among their characters by setting certain scenes in Russian-themed restaurants and cafes; featuring Russian furnishings and clothing; and showcasing moments of nostalgic reverie in both dialogue and (where available) music. Yet, the two later adaptations omit a key tenet of homeland nostalgia through the exclusion of any longing to return. Granted, while the myth is not a requirement in the common sentiments of all migrants, it is enough of a widespread phenomenon in a diaspora that its deliberate exclusion is notable. Russian émigré writers made a great effort to distance themselves from the mass reproduction of ready-made nostalgic clichés often assigned to immigrant populations by pre-established communities in Europe and the United States. To achieve this, they focused on specific individual memories instead of wide, sweeping longings.<sup>16</sup> Yet as *Anastasia* relinquished the idea of return in the later adaptations, it seemed to embrace those clichés that Russian authors fought to avoid. Without the element of return, any longing for homeland lacked the directionality that the myth of return dictated. This ultimately presents a cheap imitation when compared with the legitimate nostalgia experienced by migrant communities.

Perhaps it was too difficult for modern day show writers to include narratives of the myth of return from a historical perspective, knowing full well that those émigré communities would never have the opportunity to return. Yet the fact that those sentiments were present in the first three adaptations, and then disappeared from the

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<sup>16</sup> Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, 337.



recent narratives, demonstrates an intentional break in philosophy above all else. By including homeland nostalgia without the myth of return, it eliminated any inkling that Russian émigrés might desire to leave their new-found Western paradise, despite their longing for the imaginary Russia of the past,<sup>17</sup> which was a convincing narrative for American artists to propagate.

Even more so than the 1997 film, the 2017 musical ignores the myth of return, and seems entirely committed to a conflicting portrayal of émigré loyalties. This is due to the inclusion of a new song, titled “Land of Yesterday.” While the 2017 characters proclaim their love for France in the earlier “Paris Holds the Key,” they also proclaim their disdain for it in this Act II number. In the scene that features “Land of Yesterday,” Russian émigré nobles gather at the Neva Club to revel in the memory of Imperial Russia and mourn their current circumstances. In the only indicator of the émigrés’ desire to return to Russia, the script delineates the Neva Club as “a luxurious, almost decadent, hideaway for White Russian aristocrats who have escaped their homeland and are trying to establish a resistance to the New Order and maintain their Old Ways and familiar culture in Paris, their new—*and they hope temporary*—home.” Yet despite the comment in the script, the characters in this nostalgic setting never express a desire to return, so all the audience encounters are nostalgic and bitter émigré nobles who gather to revel in the memory of the Russia they imagine. As Boym so clearly outlines in her definition of nostalgia, the reason there is no myth of return in such depictions is because there is no “Russia” to return to, and there never really was—just a simulacrum constructed by blending memory and imagination.<sup>18</sup> In “Land of Yesterday,” Countess Lily, the

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<sup>17</sup> Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, 23.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

Dowager Empress' lady-in-waiting, wearing a glittering gown bedecked with jewels, laments her terrible circumstance:

While this song certainly depicts a longing for the way things were, and a determination to continue the lifestyle the nobility had known in pre-Revolutionary Russia, it does not express the desire to physically return home as the stage directions from the script imply. Both the song and the scene in which it appears somehow straddle *kitsch*—"imitating the effects of art, not the mechanisms of conscience"<sup>19</sup>—and *toska*—a Russian word without an English equivalent that ranges from "a great spiritual anguish, ... a longing with nothing to long for, ... a desire for somebody or something specific, ... and ennui and boredom."<sup>20</sup> Svetlana Boym integrates both *kitsch* and *toska* into her work on exiles and imagined homelands through a study of works by Vladimir Nabokov (1899–1977), Russian-American émigré writer who fled Russia in 1920.

Once, I had a palace  
Here, merely a flat  
I fled with some diamonds and that was that  
Once, ladies-in waiting  
All bending a knee  
Now, only one lady-in-waiting: me.

No fanfares, or sedan chairs  
And no coaches, and we sold our broaches  
No afternoon card games with the Tsar...  
No caviar!

But I say we're not dead now  
We're in France instead, now  
Let us not be sad!  
The night's young,  
And Russians are mad, so...

Let's live in the land of yesterday  
Live in the grand Imperial heyday  
Let's live in the land of yesterday: Russia!

Let's put on the fancy clothes,  
And let's while our woes away,  
In Russia, land of yesterday

In dire circumstances,  
Why wallow in regret?  
We're out of second chances,  
Why are we here, except to forget?  
We know the world is fickle,  
Life is a leaky sieve!  
Pass me a glass and give me a bow,  
And drink to the "Countess Nobody" now  
Why should I care as long as I dare to  
live...In the land of yesterday...

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<sup>19</sup> Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, 279.

<sup>20</sup> As defined by Vladimir Nabokov in his translation of Alexander Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin: A Novel in Verse*, Trans. Vladimir Nabokov, vol. 2. New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1964, 141, and quoted in Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, 277.

One of Boym's examples, taken from Nabokov's memoirs, is the writer's childhood Swiss governess, Mademoiselle O., who maintained a strong nostalgia for Switzerland while she was living in Russia, and then for Russia when she returned to Switzerland. A physical return to her homeland could not satisfy her, because her homeland was never where she was, but it did not stop her longing for it. According to Boym, "the only place Mademoiselle could call home is the past—mainly the past she framed for herself, or for which she found a convincing ready-made image."<sup>21</sup> After being troubled by her perpetual unhappiness, Nabokov leaves her home, he discovers a solitary swan swimming on a nearby lake. For Nabokov, the symbolism of a swan was both *kitsch* and high culture, lonely and sociable, "ridiculous yet touching."<sup>22</sup> This is the same combination of *kitsch* and *toska* as Countess Lily as she twirls among the Neva Club dancers, alternating between the Charleston and the Ukrainian Hopak, all the while singing a lament that is part whine, part irony, and part genuine heartbreak. In the same moment that she sings about caviar, she takes a drink of champagne, resulting in a ridiculous piling up of clichés while she waxes nostalgic for a Russia that never was, and therefore cannot ever be "again."

Yet despite such a strong representation of the homeland nostalgia, instead of stating a genuine desire to return to Russia as found in the myth of return, Countess Lily instead returns to the imaginary Russia of yesterday through her own song and dance, as well as the kitschy setting of the Neva Club. Such a nostalgia without a tangible direction portrays the nobles as ghosts of the "past" content to wallow in self-pity without actually doing anything to change their circumstances. While a great deal of émigrés did behave

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<sup>21</sup> Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, 278.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 279.

in a similar capacity, this song seems to mock those behaviors. By disconnecting émigré nostalgia from any desire to return to Russia on the one hand, and highlighting Anya and company's veneration of the Parisian lifestyle on the other, the narrative of the 2017 musical presents assimilation as the ultimate and inevitable goal of the émigré community.

### "Homeward" and "Homeland"

As we have seen, "Land of Yesterday" exemplifies the exclusion of the myth of return in favor of a stereotypical American representation of immigrant longing in the most recent *Anastasia* adaptation. A comparison of another song from the 2017 show, "Stay I Pray You" to the song "Homeward" from the 1965 *Anya* further demonstrates the evolution of the myth's representation that led to its eventual omission. *Anya*'s setting is Berlin, and while its characters might see the absent homeland they openly pine for in their imaginations, the audience does not. "Homeward" takes place shortly after Katrina, the proprietress of the "Cafe Czarina," has met Anya near the beginning of the play, becoming the first of Bounine's associates to believe Anya to truly be Anastasia. She uses "Homeland" as a temporary lament, longing for her lost Russia, joined by a chorus comprised of émigrés. The 2017 *Anastasia*, conversely, opens in a Russian setting, thus having an opportunity to highlight the emotional moment of departure: fresh wound, not old scar. "Stay I Pray You" takes place as a large gathering of Russians in St. Petersburg's train station prepare to depart Russia, lamenting the fact that they are leaving their homeland for good.

Despite the shift of timing and a vastly different perspective, the message of the two songs is surprisingly similar. The differences are in their surroundings, that is, the



Un poco meno mosso

34

pp

36

38

cresc.

mf

40

p

Fig. 4  
The middle section of Rachmaninov's *Prelude in G minor*, Op. 23, No. 5., with melody highlighted.

The scene that features “Homeward” is set at the “Café Czarina,” where the Russians gather and where the conmen are working on their scheme involving Anastasia. Meanwhile, the cafe proprietress Katrina is revealed to be a true believer in Anya’s identity. Contemplating the mysterious woman, Katrina wonders how something so wonderful can feel so sad. She sings “Homeward” as a lament, joined by a crowd of

émigrés from outside the window, with stage directions stating: “Massed voices are heard singing the song. Then through the scrim are seen Russians of all classes and ages singing about their homeland.”<sup>23</sup>

When evening falls on this strangely grey city,  
As daylight dies and the lonely hours start,  
My twilight thoughts leave these alien skies,  
And they fly homeward...homeward...  
Hoping that they'll find my heart.

I seem to walk through that faraway twilight,  
I see a hearth where familiar fires burn,  
The evening star hovers low above the plain,  
A faint guitar plays a melancholy strain,  
And all the pain as I wake to learn,  
I nevermore can turn homeward...homeward...  
Homeward to the homeland I adore,  
And will see no more.<sup>24</sup>

The Rachmaninov melody is presented as dark and haunting. While a fitting mood for depicting an increasingly bitter émigré community in 1925 Berlin, the finality in its tone is incongruous with the myth of return. Specifically, a sense of hope for a potential future in Russia that should be contained in the myth is entirely absent. However, the myth of return is certainly present in the scenes both before and after the song appears. In the preceding scene, Bounine and his cohorts talk to Anya about her past life as a Grand Duchess in the song “So Proud,” bolstering her confidence and reveling in both the memory of the monarchy and the hope for its restoration. The scene following “Homeward,” meanwhile, features Anya convincing both Bounine’s aristocratic backers and the peasant witnesses who had interacted with the “real” Anastasia that she is the genuine article. With the peasants, Anya sings a delightful song “Snowflakes and

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<sup>23</sup> Abbott, *Anya*, September 1965, 1-2-24.

<sup>24</sup> Wright, Forrest, and Rachmaninoff, “Homeward,” on *Anya: Original Broadway Recording*, originally released in 1965, Kritzerland, KR-20012-2, 2009, CD.

Sweethearts,” fully persuading the backers who observe her performance. Almost immediately afterwards, the conspirators fantasize about both acquiring the Romanov fortune and restoring the monarchy in a triumphant song “On That Day.” Framed by such bookends, “Homeward” can be seen as a momentary descent into melancholy, not a prevailing comment on the finality of the Russian émigré experience. If anything, it feels like more of a meta-narrative, acknowledging the history that the audience knows and the characters do not, using that disparity of perspective to underscore the story’s irony and to form an emotional and empathetic connection across the fourth wall.

“Stay, I Pray You” from the 2017 production similarly uses a sense of finality to appeal to the audience’s empathy. While Katrina and the émigrés sing to their homeland from far-away Berlin, “Stay, I Pray You” is heard in Russia, but at the moment of departure. Anya, Dmitry, and Vlad are gathered at the train station, and the scene’s description is as follows:

It is teeming with people anxious to leave Russia. There are all kinds: old, young, rich, poor, healthy, sick. The only thing they have in common is their desperation to leave. There are probably some nobility among them but they are in disguise.<sup>25</sup>

The trio encounters a former noble, Count Ipolitov, who recognizes Anya as Anastasia, bows, then quickly apologizes before moving to the opposite end of the train platform. Taken aback, they briefly discuss the exchange. Vlad identifies the Count as both a noble and an intellectual, making his departure a necessity. Yet when the train arrives, the passengers are slow to embark: they remain in place as they seem to come face to face with reality of their circumstances. As the stage direction read, “It is as if

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<sup>25</sup> McNally, *Anastasia* (2017), 52.



they are all frozen. They each realize—rich, poor, old, young, etc. —that this is probably the last time they will see their beloved St. Petersburg or ever be in Russia again.”<sup>26</sup>

Count Ipolitov then begins “Stay, I Pray You.” Like “Homeward,” this song also uses a borrowed melody, this time belonging not to a real White émigré like Rachmaninov but to fictional villain Rasputin. When the decision was made to transition *Anastasia* from animated film to Broadway, both the character of Rasputin and his music were scrapped. Yet the melody of Rasputin’s song “In the Dark of the Night” were interesting enough that Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty decided to find a way to include them in the new production. As a result, the melody that set Rasputin’s lines “Come my minions, fly for your master, let your evil shine...” is stripped of its context and reassigned to the mournful Count Ipolitov, soon joined by the chorus of the future émigrés preparing to board the train into exile (see Fig. 5–6).



Fig. 5  
“In the Dark of the Night”



Fig. 6  
“Stay, I Pray You”

<sup>26</sup> McNally, *Anastasia* (2017), 52.

Now transformed into a lament for Russia and home, the song projects a mood remarkably similar to “Homeward”

How can I desert you?  
How to tell you why?  
Coachmen, hold the horses  
Stay, I pray you  
Let me have a moment  
Let me say goodbye...

How to break the tide?  
We have shared our tears  
And shared our sorrows  
Though the scars remain  
And tears will never dry  
I'll bless my homeland till I die

To bridge and river forest and waterfall,  
Orchard sea and sky...  
Harsh and sweet and bitter to leave it all  
I'll bless my homeland till I die.

Never to return, finally breaking free  
You are all I know, you have raised me  
How to turn away? How to close the door?  
How to go where I have never gone before

The sentiment of “Stay, I Pray You” appeals to the immigrant sensibilities in many Americans, which can be illustrated by a recent article on the new production for the *New York Times* by theater critic Jose Solís. In his article, he recounted his own experience with both the 1997 animated *Anastasia* and the new Broadway production.<sup>27</sup> As a young gay man growing up in Honduras, Solís saw himself in Anya, particularly as she left her homeland in the search of something new. The animated film spends little time on the emotional implications of the departure from Russia, limiting itself to this brief exchange between Dimitri and Anya:

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<sup>27</sup> Jose Solís, “I Saw Myself in ‘Anastasia.’ And I Knew I Had to Leave Honduras,” in *The New York Times*, September 13, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/13/theater/anastasia-broadway-honduras.html>

Anya: Fine...So you think you're going to miss it?  
 Dimitri: Miss what? Your talking?  
 Anya: No! Russia.  
 Dimitri: No.  
 Anya: But it was your home.  
 Dimitri: It was a place I once lived. End of story.  
 Anya: Then you must plan on making Paris your true home.  
 Dimitri: What is it with you and homes?!  
 Anya: Well for one thing it's just something that every *normal* person wants! And for another thing...it's just...  
 Dimitri: What?  
 Anya: Forget it!<sup>28</sup>

While more effort is certainly spent on the excitement of the new destination in Paris than departure, it certainly has sentiments that would appeal to someone dissatisfied with the turmoil of home, as many immigrants in America are and were.

Remarkably similar, "Homeward" and "Stay, I Pray You" both mirror the nostalgic melancholy common among Russian émigré populations. Yet the framing of the songs underscores a distinct difference in the two shows' narratives. In the scene directly after "Stay, I Pray You" when the trio is aboard the train, they sing "We'll Go From There," an upbeat palate cleanser celebrating the individual hopes of Anya, Dmitry, and Vlad, preparing the audience for "Journey to the Past," the powerfully belted Act I closer. Indeed, both songs that follow "Stay, I Pray You" completely repudiate the nostalgic émigré narrative found in it, as well as in *Anya's* "Homeward." They show neither regret about leaving, nor a desire to return some day. Instead they set up the upbeat mood of the Act II opener "Paris Holds the Key" that portrays Anya shedding her Russianness in her fascination with Paris and the West.

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<sup>28</sup> Bluth and Goldman, *Anastasia* (1997).

### *The Great American Melting Pot*

The abandonment of long-distance nationalism and the myth of return in order to craft a subtle cliché of immigration in the 1997 and 2017 *Anastasia* adaptations goes hand in hand with the contemporaneous shift in both state policy and social discourse in the United States. I refer specifically to a turn away from multiculturalism in favor of the dialogue of assimilation and cultural nativism, which pressures immigrant populations to conform using the melting pot metaphor, which is presented as a positive and ideal outcome. The ideology of the long-distance nationalism can be seen as a liability in the context of the War on Terror, and the myth of return implies that Russian immigrants might prioritize imagined Russia over real America. A narrative of assimilation, therefore, is far more likely to appeal to the vast majority of American audiences than a portrayal of the confusing and often contradictory reality of a diaspora and the genuine Russian émigré experience.

The concept of the “American Melting Pot”—a term used to describe the goal of the immigrant assimilation process—has been largely disavowed by the scholars in the field of immigration studies.<sup>29</sup> However, it continues to occupy a place in popular culture, whether it be through *Schoolhouse Rock*’s “The Great American Melting Pot,” or on the pages of *The Boston Globe*, *HuffPost*, and *The Washington Post*, to name a few.<sup>30</sup> Over time, the meaning of the “melting pot” myth has been misconstrued both amongst scholars and the American population at large, but this ambiguity of the concept means it

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<sup>29</sup> See Orosco, *Toppling the Melting Pot*; Jacoby, *Reinventing the Melting Pot*; and Smith, “The American Melting Pot.”

<sup>30</sup> For example, see Catherine Rampell, “America’s melting pot is under assault — from the left as much as the right,” in *The Washington Post*, September 5, 2016; Lakshmi Sridaran, “Trump’s Hateful Rhetoric And Policies Have Created A New Kind Of Melting Pot,” in *HuffPost*, March 14, 2018; and Jeff Jacoby, “When America’s Melting Pot Works,” in *The Boston Globe*, September 1, 2017.

is malleable to a number of different positions on immigration matters, and continues to remain a part of the popular imagination.

The assimilation narrative represented by the concept of the melting pot was certainly a part of the landscape in the US in the 1950s and 60s when the first three *Anastasia* productions were created. However, as the US was utilizing Russian émigrés' long-distance nationalism as part of its cultural war with the Soviet Union, a narrative of assimilation was not the priority in the earlier adaptations. Instead, the 1954 play, 1956 film, and 1964 operetta portrayed the homesick Russians as victims eager to return home, the Soviet Union as the aggressor, and the state of immigration as temporary. Now, however, because both long-distance nationalism and the myth of return prioritize Russia over the United States, the assimilation narrative of the melting pot allows the 1997 and 2017 adaptations to instead highlight the superiority of the West.

This is particularly true of the most recent production, as the current narrative of immigration in the US promotes xenophobia and the elimination of difference, demanding that minority cultures blend into the dominant American culture. By demonstrating Anya's steadfast commitment to Parisian culture and mocking the *kitsch* nature of Countess Lily's nostalgia, the 2017 musical ignores the historical experience of the Russian émigrés found in the earlier productions, and avoids the political connotations of depicting long-distance nationalism, fitting squarely into this new era of the American melting pot.

## Chapter 3:

### “Everything’s in Red”: Anastasia the Victim

In his book *From Moscow to Main Street*, scholar Victor Ripp suggests that the third-wave Russian émigrés’ conception of America usually did not align with reality, because “[America] has long occupied a special place in the Russian national fantasy, with a dizzying image constructed of two centuries of misinformation, myth-making, and propaganda.”<sup>1</sup> Yet this statement would be just as true with respect to Americans’ perception of Russia. As a source of simultaneous anxiety and morbid fascination, the Soviet Union stepped into the role that Nazi Germany had left vacant at the end of WWII, becoming a clear and tangible enemy to the United States in 1946. Even after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the strain persisted in the relationship between the two nations. While tensions have varied throughout the years, and there have certainly been periods of increased cooperation, a great majority of the public continues to equate Russia with villainy.<sup>2</sup>

When the original film and play premiered in the early 1950s, the US was entrenched in the Second Red Scare, but by the time the animated film premiered in 1997 the Cold War had effectively ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. And now, as

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<sup>1</sup> Ripp, *Moscow to Main Street*, 12.

<sup>2</sup> For data and evidence of American Public Opinion on the USSR and Russia, see scholarship such as Ole Rudolf Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2004); Robert Jervis and Seweryn Bialer, ed., *Soviet-American Relations After the Cold War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991); Angela Stent, *The Limits of Partnership* (Cambridge, MA: Princeton University Press, 2015); and polls such as YouGov, “America’s Friends and Enemies,” *YouGov*, February 2, 2017, <https://today.yougov.com/topics/politics/articles-reports/2017/02/02/americas-friends-and-enemies> and Art Swift, “In U.S., Record 68% View Russia as Unfriendly or an Enemy,” *Gallup*, March 27, 2014, <http://news.gallup.com/poll/168110/record-view-russia-unfriendly-enemy.aspx>.

the new musical has established itself on Broadway, we are faced with a “New Cold War,” characterized by Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, and the looming Mueller investigation.<sup>3</sup> Having such parallel adaptations throughout the various periods of the Cold War allows us to explore America's complicated relationship with Russia and the USSR via these cultural manifestations of *Anastasia*. While thus far my analysis of these five *Anastasia* adaptations has been centered on the history (and representation) of the interwar period of 1918–1939, the continuity in this sequence of adaptations from the 1954 play to the 2017 musical allows us to contextualize these productions within the framework of their time. In other words, when placed alongside American foreign policy during the Cold War, each rendition reveals a great deal about the American mindset in the varying periods of tension and release from the Cold War to the present day. This is evident particularly in regard to the villainy the vulnerable heroine must face in each adaptation, which changes drastically between the varying periods of the twentieth and now twenty-first centuries to align with public opinion on the Soviet Union and Russia. This villainy defines the broad good “us” vs. bad “them” duality in the *Anastasia* narrative, as well as the individual villains that appear in each of the stories. Therefore, I will be using “antagonizing force” broadly, to be individual or collective, named or unnamed.

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<sup>3</sup> Osnos, Remnick, and Yaffa, “The New Cold War.”

### The “Acute” Cold War

While the first three *Anastasia* adaptations spanned ten years, all three of them premiered during the time that Strada and Troper label the “Acute Cold War.”<sup>4</sup> It was a vastly different time than the preceding era, in which Franklin D. Roosevelt forged a working alliance with the Soviet Union and the Russian people during WWII. Hollywood helped sell that alliance to the American public through pro-Soviet films such as *The North Star* (1943), which showcased Ukrainian villagers rising up against German invaders, and featured an idealized depiction of Soviet collective farms.<sup>5</sup> Now Roosevelt and his alliance were gone, and the United States would soon witness three presidential personalities in Harry Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and John F. Kennedy in the years to come, who would all contribute to the US’s unifying foreign policy theme of confrontational mistrust between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The postwar deterioration in Soviet-American relations cannot be attributed to any one event. Beginning in early 1946, one crisis after another impacted the relationship between the superpowers. By the time the rest of the world had recovered enough from WWII to pay attention, the West was divided from Eastern Europe along a fissure that Winston Churchill dubbed the “Iron Curtain.” While the prevailing American view of the Soviets shifted dramatically from that of an ally to an enemy, in many ways the psychology of the Cold War paralleled that of World War II. It was easier to draw a clear line in the sand that separated good from evil than to spend time considering consistency, irony, or paradox. America had such a line during World War II, and it wanted another

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<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all of the background regarding US foreign policy and film studies in this section is summarized from Strada and Troper, “1946–1962: Acute Cold War,” in *Friend or Foe*, 60–95.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 34–40.



with the Cold War. It is under these circumstances that *Anastasia* found its way to the stage for the first time, a representation of the horrors and atrocities that the Soviets were capable of. If they could murder the Romanov children, what would stop them from doing the same to the American kids?

The fear of an outright war with the Soviet Union, and the resultant vilification of communism in the United States led to the Second Red Scare. Countless artists who had been a part of the pro-Soviet and pro-Russian creative efforts of the World War II era were dragged before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), which had seemingly forgotten that until the end of the war, Russia had been America's ally. Movies such as *The North Star* (1943), *Song of Russia* (1943), and *Mission to Moscow* (1943) earned their creative teams front row seats to Joseph McCarthy's witch hunt, and many of their careers ended in the process. Hollywood's glitter became tarnished in the late 1940s and early 1950s, as the exaggerated fears of domestic communism rumbled through Tinseltown. Normally shy of controversy, studios and producers over-achieved in self-correction. Studio bosses placed scores of Hollywood's most creative souls on the industry's blacklist, solely to save their own skins. The committee made freedom of expression—and the film, musical, and theatrical industries—the first American casualty of the Cold War.

Film critics as early as 1949 noted that Russian film characters nearly disappeared from Hollywood films after the war. From 1946 to 1962, Russian settings and subjects were largely off-limits in Hollywood; the same could be said for Broadway, although it presented far fewer Russian-themed productions than Hollywood during the war years to

begin with.<sup>6</sup> During the initial period of the Cold War, only sixteen films with Russian characters were released—barely one per year. Furthermore, these characters tended to conform to certain archetypes that had proven successful (and safe) for American audiences in the past. One of the most famous prior models appears in the film *Ninotchka* (1939), in which a hard and stern Soviet woman is wooed by the joy and freedom of a Western man. In the end, love triumphs over communism, and Ninotchka leaves the Soviet Union. According to Strada and Troper, *Anastasia* is one of these so-called “*Ninotchka* clones,” not because of a Western or Soviet character—which the story clearly lacked—but because of the romance involved and the focus on the generic triumph over the Soviet Union. The plot elements made the story safe for American audiences.

While the romance aspect is certainly true of the 1956 film, particularly with Bounine played by heartthrob Yul Brynner it was significantly less relevant in the 1954 play. Instead of falling for and running away with the man who “created” this new version of herself, Bounine, Anna disappears without any explanation, likely with Dr. Michael Serensky, her former lover. In the play, Bounine is in fact rather a villain himself, known for lines such as “A challenge? We will see (He catches her by the arm and gives it an upward turn. She gives a little cry of pain). It might be amusing to give you some lessons in refined love-making.”<sup>7</sup> Anna is both a victim of the Soviet Union and a victim of Bounine’s scheming, and so the antagonism is divided between the two forces, ultimately driving Anna away once more. By transforming Bounine into the love

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<sup>6</sup> Stanley Green and Cary Ginell, *Broadway Musicals: Show by Show* (Milwaukee, WI: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2014) and Edwin Bronner, *The Encyclopedia of the American Theatre, 1900–1975* (San Diego: A.S. Barnes, 1980).

<sup>7</sup> Bolton and Maurette, *Anastasia* (1954), 48.

interest in both the 1956 film, Anna can be more clearly portrayed as the victim of the USSR's villainy, making her story safer to put on screen in the era of the HUAC.

Yet ironically enough, the dialogue of the film regarding the Bolsheviks and the Revolution is incredibly vague compared to the play. While both productions almost entirely exclude references to the Soviet Union, the film has even fewer references to both the Revolution and the new regime, only allowing for the occasional "comrade" as a spiteful joke. One of the few lines that originated in the 1954 play, "Good evening, comrades—if that term doesn't grate too unpleasantly on your White Russian ears,"<sup>8</sup> was the most common attempt to situate the story in the wake of the Revolution, and existed in both the play and the subsequent film and operetta. Yet while the film is vague at best, providing general allusions to the entity that landed all of the émigrés there in the first place, the play includes references to Soviet nationalization of property; Bolshevik spies; and the Joint State Political Directorate (the English translation of the OGPU: the Soviet secret police from 1923–1934).<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the film simultaneously narrows its antagonism to the Soviet Union, but leaves its enemy unnamed, potentially sparing it the ire of HUAC through an odd combination of pandering and self-censorship. Ultimately America responded to acute Cold War anxiety with a militant and defensive overreaction, coupled with avoidance of the source of anxiety whenever possible, which is so plainly illustrated in the transition from the 1954 play to the 1956 film. The villain of the film was clearly definable as the Soviet Union, and yet that villain was never truly named.

The acute Cold War is generally believed to have ended in 1962 with the resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis. While *Anya* did not open until 1965, it had been in

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<sup>8</sup> Bolton and Maurette, *Anastasia* (1954), 36.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 36, 47.

the works long before its premiere. It was incredibly influenced by the 1950s mentality that had informed the 1956 film, borrowing the USSR as a villain. Yet 1965 was not 1956. In the same sense that *Anya* used the old-fashioned operetta structure and style in an era that no longer wanted operettas, it also offered an outdated view of Russia and the Soviet Union to an audience exhausted after the high anxiety of the 1950s. Americans now wanted to believe that the other side was also inhabited by human beings, who ultimately wanted peace as much as they did. Yet another rendition of the tired tale of Soviet villainy felt dated, and the audiences wanted none of it. *Anya* belonged to a different time, both musically and thematically, and that is why it failed.<sup>10</sup>

*Fiddler on the Roof* is exemplary of the American desire for Russian characters to step beyond their flat villainy. Telling the tale of Tevye the milkman and the relationship between the Jews and the Russians in the turn of the 20th century Pale of Settlement, *Fiddler on the Roof* did its best to portray a wide variety of characters on both sides of the ethnic (and ideological) divide: not all of its Russians were villains, and not all of its Jews were victims or saints.<sup>11</sup> Premiering in 1964, it would become the first American musical to surpass 3,000 performances, an outcome vastly different from *Anya*. Complex characters, even the supposedly villainous ones, and particularly when selecting the “right” path over the “easy,” were far more desirable to American audiences in post-Cuban Missile Crisis and forthcoming anti-Vietnam War America.

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<sup>10</sup> While this reading of *Anya*’s failures is largely my own, I base my conclusions on various clippings on the show’s production history as housed in the NYPL Performing Arts Library: *Anya Clippings*, 1960-1965, MWEZ 29327.

<sup>11</sup> Ethan Mordden, *Open a New Window: The Broadway Musical in the 1960s* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 140–151.

### *The 1997 Film: Reinventing the Villain*

After the failed production of *Anya*, the *Anastasia* retellings took a long hiatus. Films were made regarding the rest of the Romanov family, such as *Nicholas and Alexandra* in 1971, but the lost Russian princess remained inconspicuous. Meanwhile, the next three decades brought a number of ups and downs in America's relationship with the USSR, from the 1970s *détente* to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and its consequences, Ronald Reagan's "Evil Empire," and finally *perestroyka* and *glasnost* of the late 1980s.<sup>12</sup> In the wake of devastating economic hardship, the Soviet Union fell in 1991, effectively ending the Cold War and officially robbing the United States of its favorite adversary. According to author, vlogger, and educator, John Green, the United States was left in something of a "policy limbo. . . .The idea of a super-powerful, malevolent . . . Soviet Union poised to destroy the American way of life provided a comfortable structure for all our foreign relations for almost fifty years,"<sup>13</sup> as well as giving the US a reason to build up its military while reaping the economic benefits of the arms race.

This removal of the Soviet enemy, combined with the golden age of Disney that began in 1989 and continued throughout the 1990s, gave Fox Family Entertainment another opportunity to revive the *Anastasia* story. As discussed, the 1997 animated version of *Anastasia* removed the conflict of the Russian Revolution from the plot, and replaced it with a fantastical and impossibly unrealistic Rasputin. While the utilization of Rasputin as the animated film's villain seems to reflect a post-Cold War culture in America, it could be said that because this was intended as a children's movie meant to

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<sup>12</sup> Wiener. *The United States and Russia*.

<sup>13</sup> As quoted by Wiener, *The United States and Russia*, 70.

capitalize on the Disney Renaissance, a comically terrifying villain would certainly be more palatable to younger audiences than the reality of the murdered Romanov family. However, while the Russian Revolution would be a dark subject to broach in an animated film, Disney's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, which had premiered the previous year, had proven that dark content could successfully be represented in an animated musical.<sup>14</sup> Choosing to establish Rasputin as the villain, and not the émigré comen or the Soviets, reflected the void left by the end of the Cold War in both American culture and foreign policy. In addition, by blaming the Russian Revolution on the forces of evil, dark magic, filmmakers correlated the establishment of communism with evil, while robbing the Bolsheviks and the Russian people of agency.

Indeed, in her analysis of the 1997 film Marit Knollmueller argues that Fox Family Entertainment's version is meant to convey Fox's conservative message of religiosity, which equates communism with godlessness, and godlessness with evil.<sup>15</sup> Yet while her reading of various plot and lyrical elements reinforces the theme of godlessness, a key moment in the film's soundtrack stands in opposition to her conclusion. Most of 1997 film's score was written by David Newman, the son of the 1956 *Anastasia* composer, Alfred Newman. David Newman largely abandoned his father's tendency to incorporate pre-existing music; the only pre-existing music in the film is an excerpt from Rimsky-Korsakov's "Russian Easter Festival Overture," which is itself a quotation of the Orthodox Easter hymn "Let God Arise," which damns non-believers (see Fig. 7):

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<sup>14</sup> Owen Gleiberman, "The Hunchback of Notre Dame (Movie – 1996)," *Entertainment Weekly*, June 21, 1996.

<sup>15</sup> Knollmueller, "Anastasia(s)," 3-20.



Fig. 7  
“Let God Arise”

It is also the sole shared musical idea between the two films, having been featured in the 1956 film likely due to its temporal setting in Paris during the Russian Orthodox Easter celebrations.<sup>16</sup> In the 1997 film, the hymn is arranged for a chorus that sings during the brief montage that represents the entirety of the Russian Revolution, and as such the mood and text of the hymn takes on a much darker tone.<sup>17</sup> While the song is performed in Russian, and would be inaccessible to most Americans, the translation is as follows:

Glory to the revolution!  
Many of us are killed.  
It is easier to mourn the profligate.  
Everything in life is in vain—better to light the fire!

There is nothing to lose!  
Freedom? If only...  
God knows we're going to new and better places

Glory to the revolution!  
Many of us are killed.  
Those who needed to be killed.

To the glory of the revolution!  
He who survives [the Revolution] will say "Glory! Glory!"<sup>18</sup>

By utilizing an Orthodox chant for an angry mob of revolutionaries, this feels less like a godless mob of atheists and more a mob of desperate devotees. In addition, the shift

<sup>16</sup> Litvak, *Anastasia* (1956), 2:46

<sup>17</sup> Bluth and Goldman, *Anastasia* (1997), 4:35.

<sup>18</sup> Translated from the Russian by Thea Austen and Dr. Olga Haldey.

to Paris did not suddenly present audiences with an overtly religious or pious community in contrast to the Soviets. Communism is still equated with evil through Rasputin's supposed instigation of the Russian Revolution, but it is less a reflection of godlessness than stereotypical villainy. This is most obvious in the lyrics of Rasputin's song, "In the Dark of the Night," which echoes previous Disney villain songs such as "Be Prepared" from *The Lion King*:

I was once the most mystical man in all Russia  
When the royals betrayed me they made a mistake  
My curse made each of them pay  
But one little girl got away  
Little Anya, beware, Rasputin's awake!

In the dark of the night, evil will find her  
In the dark of the night, just before dawn  
Revenge will be sweet  
When the curse is complete  
In the dark of the night, she'll be gone!

Despite the fact that Rasputin's quarrel was supposedly with Nicholas, he is blindly determined to kill a child to accomplish his evil plot.

While raw villainy is admittedly a less creative interpretation than Knollmueller's religious reading, it is certainly in alignment with a post-Soviet political environment, where the US was suddenly faced with a world without an obvious enemy or a worthy adversary. This type of archetype for a widely established villain was mirrored in the continued production of movies in the 1990s that featured blatantly evil Russian characters, such as *Air Force One*; these static characters were villains largely for the fact that they were Russian.<sup>19</sup> While the US could no longer claim to be in opposition with the new Russian Federation, despite a deteriorating relationship brought upon by Boris

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<sup>19</sup> Goscilo, *Fade From Red*, 120–208.



Yeltsin's inability to stabilize the Russian economy, it seemed that Hollywood was determined to continue the villainy of Russian subjects in its stead. After all, the USSR had been *the* US enemy for nearly fifty years, and such a trope was not so easily forgotten by an industry that once organized its survival on the delicate depiction of Russian subjects.

*The 2017 Musical: The Russian Enemy Reforged*

Vladimir Putin rose to power in 1999 in the wake of total economic disaster. Yet as the economy recovered, Putin's popularity soared along with it. Despite Russia's constitutional term limits, Putin has retained his hold on power in the former USSR up until the present day using puppetry, sham elections, and loopholes. That in and of itself would not result in the necessity of a reformed Russian villain in the *Anastasia* adaptations, but Russian politics have once again become embroiled with our own, largely due to Putin. During Russian protests in 2012 that spoke out against his likely fraudulent election, Putin sent paramilitary troops into the streets to crush the rebellion. He has essentially owned Russia ever since.<sup>20</sup> While US and Russia relations had improved since Barack Obama's election in 2008 and the so-called "reset button" policy, the rigged 2012 election created a new rift in the budding relationship. In a speech following the Russian election, then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, criticized Putin's coup by stating, "the Russian people, like people everywhere, deserve the right to have their voices heard and their votes counted, and that means they deserve fair, free,

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<sup>20</sup> Stent, *The Limits of Partnership*, 244–247 and 251–254.

transparent elections and leaders who are accountable to them.”<sup>21</sup> Putin blamed Clinton, viewing her actions as a direct attempt to undermine his power.

Ultimately Putin would not forget her words, even if the rest of the world largely had, particularly as she renewed her presidential candidacy in 2016. Russia’s interference in the 2016 election,<sup>22</sup> while denied by all members of the Russian political apparatus, would appear to be in direct retribution against Clinton’s meddling in the aftermath of the Russian election—a Cold War-esque tit-for-tat. Much speculation continues to surround the role Russian interference played in the results of the 2016 election, in which Donald Trump defeated Clinton, but it has inflamed tensions that were already high in Washington. Suddenly the American public has a need for a Soviet enemy again, in which to serve as a proxy for the contemporary conflict between the US and Russia.

In the new 2017 Broadway adaptation of *Anastasia*, Disney’s villainous Rasputin disappears without a trace. Between the obvious challenge of portraying such an unrealistic character on stage, and his complete historical inaccuracy, he became rather an inconvenience in the *Anastasia* tale. Yet instead of reverting back to the Cold War era antagonism, alluding to the Bolshevik regime and allowing it to loom abstractly above the émigrés’ heads as it had in the earlier adaptations, the new *Anastasia* places blame on actual flesh and blood Soviets, who finally make their stage debut after 63 years of *Anastasia* adaptations, over a quarter century after the demise of the USSR, and the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Instead of Rasputin, the show’s writers conjure the Gleb Vaganov, an up-and-coming Soviet official who is eventually tasked with

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<sup>21</sup> As quoted by Warrick and DeYoung, “From ‘Reset’ to ‘Pause.’”

<sup>22</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections” in *Intelligence Community Assessment*, January 7, 2017.

disposing of Anya (and with her, Anastasia), despite his growing attraction to her. This change was supposedly made in order to support a more historically accurate narrative, but tracing the antagonism of the previous adaptations reveals that this is an overly simplified justification. After all, the earlier versions of the tale presented a historical approach to the antagonism, and they did so without a Soviet agent attempting to murder an unarmed woman. In some of the most climactic moments of the musical, red light and cloth blaze across the backdrop, and communist forces loom imposingly over the action of the stage, further entrenching our perception of good and evil in this newly re-imagined story.

This production attempts to represent the Soviet state more realistically. The character of Gleb is used to represent the fervor of the new era, as well as justify the killing of the royal family, as the show's writers make his father a part of the execution squad. Still, the plot presents nothing more than a simplistic picture of the actual events, mocking the Soviets at every turn while barely acknowledging the severe failings and ineptitude of Nicholas and Alexandra. For instance, the song "A Rumor in St. Petersburg" in the animated film contains stereotypically anti-Soviet lyrics such as these:

St. Petersburg is gloomy, St. Petersburg is bleak,  
My underwear is frozen from standing here all week,  
Ever since the Revolution, our lives have been so grave,  
Thank goodness for the gossip, that gets us through the day, hey!

Yet while the melody of the song is recycled, along with a select few lyrics, the rest are rewritten and made to be even more anti-Soviet in the most recent production. Beginning with a reference to the city's name change from St. Petersburg to Leningrad (and conveniently leaving out the fact that Petersburg was Petrograd as of 1914), the lyrics proceed to further mock the Soviet regime.

Dmitry: They can call it Leningrad, but it will always be  
Petersburg. New name, same empty stomachs.

They tell us times are better  
Well, I say they're not  
Can't cook an empty promise in an empty pot  
'A brighter day is dawning! It's almost at hand!'  
The skies are gray, the walls have ears, and he who argues disappears!  
Hail our brave new land

St. Petersburg is booming  
A city on the rise  
It's really very friendly if you don't mind spies!  
We stand behind our leaders  
And stand in line for bread  
We're good and loyal comrades, and our favorite color's  
red!

Now everyone is equal  
Professors push the broom  
Two-dozen total strangers live in two small rooms  
You hold a revolution, and here's the price you pay  
Spacebo za slukhi! [Thanks for the rumors!]  
Thank goodness for the gossip  
That gets us through the day. Hey!

The oversimplification inherent in these images, both visual and verbal, plays into an  
entrenched American stereotypes of the early Soviet Union.

In addition to mocking the Soviet cause and the reality of the Bolshevik  
Revolution, the show struggles to fully develop Gleb's character. The best effort to do so  
is the song "The Neva Flows," which is one of the highlights of the newly composed  
music for the stage production. In the song, Gleb narrates to Anya the story of his father's  
involvement in the murder of her family, and recommits to the tenets of the Revolution,  
singing:

Be very careful of these rumors that prevail  
Be very careful what you say  
I was a boy who lived the truth behind the tale  
And no one got away

The Neva flows, a new wind blows  
And soon it will be spring  
The leaves unfold, the Tsar lies cold  
A revolution is a simple thing

This song foreshadows the climax of the story, in which Gleb holds Anya at gunpoint. Challenging his historically accurate viewpoint that “the Romanovs had everything and gave back nothing” and their demise is therefore justified, Anya goads him into standing by his convictions by shooting her, which he of course cannot. This is the only instance where any character questions the victimhood of the Romanovs, and it is over almost the instant it began. Ultimately Gleb’s moral dilemma is meant to demonstrate the complexities of Revolution, and that violent uprising is a choice that can be avoided. Unfortunately, the show seems to dilute its own argument by establishing Gleb’s surprisingly fierce attraction for Anya considering their minimal interactions. Had he not wanted her before he learned who she was, would it have been so difficult to pull the trigger? Unfortunately, we shall never know. As Gleb is the only Soviet character represented, and is woefully flat, this contributes to an overall underdeveloped Soviet perspective. Gleb’s villainy is therefore almost as empty as Rasputin’s in the previous rendition: while there are attempts to portray him as more than a one-dimensional “bad guy,” he still comes out as much of a caricature as Disney’s undead holy man.

The constantly shifting narrative of America’s current political relationship with Russia seems to be manifested in the confused messaging of the new musical. As the Soviet Union no longer exists, is that the enemy the audience should imagine? Does the

Soviet Union represented in the show serve as a functioning surrogate for the Russia of today? Or instead, should audiences disconnect the Soviet Union from history and see its depiction as commentary on totalitarian regimes as a whole? The clear line drawn in the sand of the 1950s has not re-solidified, resulting in a muddled attempt at representing the Russia-West antagonism in this new *Anastasia* adaptation. On one hand, the show embraces Russia and uses it to set the stage for the message the musical is attempting to convey. Yet the deep-seated misconceptions about what Russia is (and what the USSR was), and an inherent fear of what Russia represents are echoed through this show, as it does in public perception today. It is how the 2017 *Anastasia* approaches history—Russian history, US history, and its own—that derails its narrative.

## Chapter 4:

### “Men Are Such Babies”: *Anastasia* the Woman

Another important aspect of the *Anastasia* adaptations that similarly evolves from American public opinion and incorrectly navigates Russian history is the evolution of Anastasia's femininity. Kimberly Williams hints at the feminist undertones of the *Anastasia* mythos that Anastasia's “ghost” was used to set up the gendered roles for US-Russia relations as part of the Cold-War narrative, with the former Imperial Russia playing the damsel-in-distress to her masculine American savior.<sup>1</sup> Yet Williams' work on *Anastasia* focuses overwhelmingly on the 1997 animated feature and US perspectives in the 1990s, only briefly mentioning other adaptations, and making no mention of the fluid nature of Anastasia's femininity. In this chapter I argue that *Anastasia* presents a unique opportunity to analyze Anya's evolving character under the lens of the different periods of US history and their corresponding feminist waves in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The changes in Anastasia's femininity are revealed in two capacities. The first develops from setting the beginning of the story in the Soviet Union in the 1997 and 2017 adaptations. Earlier productions featured Anya living in Berlin and France; yet the 1997 animated film and 2017 musical begin in 1920s communist Russia. This creative choice allows for a direct comparison between Western feminism and Bolshevik ideas on gender roles in the early years of the USSR, particularly when compared to Anya's agency—or

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<sup>1</sup> Williams, “The Death of the Maiden,” in *Imagining Russia*, 2012

lack thereof—revealing just how much the Anastasia narrative aligned with Western feminist trends while ignoring both the historical realities and the tenets of Bolshevik feminism. While screen and show writers of the later adaptations likely did not consider the realities of women in the early Soviet Union when crafting Anastasia's character, their lack of historical verisimilitude makes the contrast that much more apparent. The shows themselves make a strong comment on American feminism by completely subverting actual history in favor of a more appealing narrative to modern, American audiences.

The second area in which Anya's femininity evolves is through the inclusion of specific fairy tale tropes. For instance, the adaptations draw metaphorical comparisons between Anya's story and the plots of certain fairy tales, specifically *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, and *Swan Lake*. These comparisons are further made visible to the audience starting with the 1956 film, the first to have its characters attend a Russian classical ballet performance based on the appropriate fairy tale. Their heroines—Aurora, Cinderella, and Odette—allow writers to develop Anastasia's agency in her own story, as reflective of the evolution between second-, third-, and fourth-wave feminism.

As Anastasia was both a historical princess and a present-day myth, the ambiguity of her character made her a perfect vehicle for crafting a modern fairy tale, meant to embrace the feminine expectations of American society and the ideology of a corresponding feminist wave at the time of a particular adaptation. Through an analysis of gender politics in the 1920s-era Soviet Union; an exploration of fairy tale feminism; and a reading of the ballet scenes in the 1956 film, the 1997 animated film, and the 2017 musical, I will illustrate how the American feminist precepts embedded in each subsequent *Anastasia* reflect the increasingly ahistorical nature of the tale. Instead of



representing Anastasia as she might have been, these adaptations present an ideal Western woman to its American audiences. The more recent productions in particular depart quite heavily from both Anastasia's history and the Bolshevik gender ideals, which despite their Russian settings they blatantly ignore, embracing Disney fairy tale princesses under the false banner of history.

### *The Bolshevik "New Woman"*

In order to understand what the "historical" Anastasia might have been exposed to had she truly survived and found herself wandering the street in the early Soviet state, I would like to outline the basic tenets and history of Bolshevik feminism, particularly the concept of "The New Woman."<sup>2</sup> As mentioned above, Russia experienced two revolutions in 1917: the February Revolution and the October Revolution. Notably, the riots that brought the February Revolution into being were sparked by the protests on the International Women's Day, February 23. While it is unclear who or what sparked the initial outburst, women workers were soon pouring out of the industrial areas of Petrograd, joining forces with women protesting bread rations, until more than 50,000 factory men and women had taken to the streets. The female activists within the Bolshevik faction would certainly not forget the female instigation of the February Revolution in the months and years to come.

When the Bolsheviks seized power in October 1917, the implications for women's rights were vast. While most of the political factions at the time had declared an intention to address gender equality, none had committed to it more steadfastly than the

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise specified, historical background on early Soviet politics and Bolshevik feminism stem from Clements, *Daughters of Revolution*.

Bolsheviks. This was largely due to the presence of a core group of women already advocating for that cause among the Bolsheviks since before WWI, including Nadezhda Krupskaya, Lenin's wife; Inessa Armand; Konkordia Samoilova, who had organized the first march for International Women's Day in 1913 during her time with the Social Democrats; and Alexandra Kollontai, a former member of the provisional government who became a strong supporter of Lenin by 1915 due to his opposition to WWI. While it would be untrue to state that Bolshevik philosophy was free of contradictions or misplaced ideals, one consistent aspect of their revolutionary ideology (whether or not it was successfully carried out) was the idea of rebirth, particularly with regards to the individual Soviet citizen. In an ideal Soviet society, all members of the citizenry would put aside the ways of the past in favor of the new socialist economic system. This overhaul of the economy would resolve all kinds of social and political problems—such as sexism, racism, and other inequalities—which would be forgotten as their underlying economic causes began to disappear.

In the eyes of the Bolsheviks, the only way to ensure equality between men and women was to free women from their economic dependence on men. While this ideal ignored the anti-feminist implication that women were simply “beneficiaries of this historical transformation” carried out by men, its emphasis on the economic “big picture” connected it to other inherent societal problems, increasing its significance when compared to contemporaneous Western attempts at feminism.<sup>3</sup> The new constitution in 1918 declared women the political equals of men, and codified marriage reforms that would make it more of a flexible enterprise, such as removing the necessity for a church

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<sup>3</sup> Clements, *Daughters of Revolution*, 40.

ceremony and legalizing divorce. In 1919, Armand and Kollontai proposed an organization dedicated to enlisting support from skeptical peasant and working-class women. This organization would become known as the Department for Work Among Women, Zhenotdel for short. Strides were made to collectivize motherhood and domestic work, so that a woman could enter the workforce without any discrimination based on the possibility of pregnancy, or be forced to leave because the burden of child care was too high. A woman therefore could reinvent herself in whatever image she chose, not just as a mother or a wife—two roles that were dependent upon men.



Fig. 8  
Strakhov-Braslavskij A. I., 1926  
“Emancipated woman – build up  
Socialism.”



Fig. 9  
G. Shegal, 1931  
"Down with kitchen slavery! We demand  
new daily life!"

The civil war that followed the October Revolution left the economy in worse condition than it had been prior to the revolutions of 1917. Yet when the dust settled in 1921, leaving the Red Army victorious and Bolshevik rule intact, the utopian Bolshevik ideals finally had a chance to take root. The New Economic Policy (NEP) was passed in 1921, which allowed for some private enterprise to stabilize the economy as the Bolsheviks began the process of building up heavy industry and other economic projects (industrialization) and rural collectivization.<sup>4</sup> Cities once again swelled with people, and while things were certainly not easy for those embracing the urban life, it provided exciting new opportunities for many, particularly women. The Zhenotdel grew rapidly, working towards gender equality and women's access to all forms of work, until its abolishment in late 1929. Political strides were made to increase access to education and to decrease job discrimination. Under Joseph Stalin's First Five Year Plan (1928–1932), female joblessness (if not job discrimination) was eliminated in urban areas. The Zhenotdel had been founded as a way to convince women to join the Bolshevik revolution, but had transformed into an agency dedicated to the rights of women. Yet with many men resentful of the changes within Soviet leadership, as well as the perspective that the Zhenotdel prioritized gender inequality over class struggle, Stalin saw no reason to keep it open. The Zhenotdel's altered purpose provided an excuse needed to shut it down; it was no longer doing what it was created to do. The "women's question" was declared to have been "solved," and that was that.

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<sup>4</sup> Industrialization and "economic projects" could include Soviet projects such as mining, building hydroelectric dams to bring electricity to remote areas; building roads and canals, and large-scale urban development projects such as the construction of the Moscow metro. Collectivization refers to the forced consolidation of individual peasant lands and whatever went with it into collective farms, which in full swing by the end of the 1920s.

It is under these circumstances, that our long-lost princess Anastasia makes her reappearance in the two most recent adaptations of the Anastasia myth. While the capital of the Soviet Union was moved to Moscow in 1918, Leningrad was just as much of the Soviet movement as the new capital. As a literate and able-bodied female worker, despite her unaccounted-for past, Anya would have been an asset to the development of Leningrad in the 1920s. In spite of that fact, depicting Anastasia—a princess that the United States has all but adopted as its own—as a Bolshevik New Woman just does not fit into the overall narrative of any of the *Anastasia* retellings. As discussed in previous chapters, Anya’s strong veneration of the West at the expense of Russia are inescapable in these renditions. Furthermore, in the 2017 production, the historical reality of the early USSR was altered to provide a stronger justification for leaving it. In one of its opening scenes, Anya declares to a Soviet official that she cannot afford to take a moment’s break from her job as a street sweeper because “[these jobs are] not easy to come by.”<sup>5</sup> In 1927 Leningrad, jobs were absolutely everywhere, particularly for a woman who could read and was strong enough to walk halfway across Russia as she claims to have done later in the show.<sup>6</sup>

While the Great Depression sent the United States and Western Europe into an economic nosedive in 1929, that was not the case with the USSR’s job market. In fact, it was during this time that some Americans relocated to the USSR for work. One of the most famous examples of that was Robert Robinson, who moved to Russia from Detroit in 1930 to work in a Soviet factory producing Model T cars, successfully avoiding unemployment in the wake of the Depression and escaping the institutionalized racism

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<sup>5</sup> McNally, *Anastasia* (2017), 12.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 42.

that had resulted in a lynching of a friend. Yet upon his arrival in Stalingrad, he was assaulted by two white American workers. The USSR quickly used his story to spotlight racism that made America inferior to the USSR.<sup>7</sup> In other words, urban life in Russia certainly was not easy, but to claim that Anya could potentially lose her job as a street sweeper with no hope of reemployment severely misrepresents the state of Russia's economy at the time. At least in the 1997 version Anya left the orphanage she resided in to claim a job at the "fish factory" in a neighboring town.<sup>8</sup>

Considering the idea of "rebirth" inherent both in Anastasia's name and in Bolshevik ideology, it is difficult to comprehend Anya's longing for a time and a past she cannot remember, which she prioritizes over being a member of Soviet society. The earlier adaptations avoid this issue altogether, as their entirely Western setting carries an implication that Anastasia was forced to flee the country almost immediately after the murder of her family. That would mean that she would never have experienced the daily life in post-war Soviet Russia. However, by claiming historical accuracy and failing to live up to its own claims, staging the beginning of the musical in St. Petersburg/Leningrad, and making Anastasia's age more accurate, the door was opened to these critical commentaries. If she had spent a decade in the USSR, particularly with no memory of her previous life, she would be the perfect candidate to illustrate Bolshevik identity building instead of yearning for some unknown world of Imperial splendor.

Nostalgia can be dangerous, particularly when experienced collectively by large groups. As Svetlana Boym argues, "longing might be what we share as human beings,

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<sup>7</sup> Joy Gleason Carew, *Blacks, Red, and Russians: Sojourners in Search of the Soviet Promise* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 67–89.

<sup>8</sup> Bluth and Goldman, *Anastasia* (1997).

but that doesn't prevent us from telling very different stories of belonging and non-belonging."<sup>9</sup> Representations of the USSR in United States in the 1920s and 30s inspired Americans to emigrate, either temporarily or permanently, to the Soviet Union to be a part of the Great Experiment. According to Julia Mickenberg,<sup>10</sup> the idea of Soviet femininity proved particularly enticing for American women. Claude McKay (1889–1948), Jamaican-American writer and member of the Harlem Renaissance who spent time in Soviet Russia in 1992, even reported back that “Soviet...women have been ‘viciously maligned and misrepresented’ in the United States.”<sup>11</sup> Nearly a century later, lowly Anya cannot even let go of her broom.

### Fairy Tale Feminism

Another way of analyzing the imposed Western ideas of femininity in *Anastasia* adaptations is through recognition and interpretation of the fairy tale tropes embedded in them. Much work has been done since the 1970s to analyze the representations of women in fairy tales, and how those representations both reinforce and subvert pre-existing expectations of femininity.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the *Anastasia* narratives contain a number of allusions to and parallels with specific well-known fairy tales. The myth is “fairy-tale-like” to begin with, but additional deliberate choices are made in specific shows to elucidate the fairy tale connection to the audience. This establishes a relationship between *Anastasia* and her fairy tale ancestors beyond vague similarity.

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<sup>9</sup> Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, 41.

<sup>10</sup> Mickenberg, *American Girls in Red Russia*.

<sup>11</sup> As quoted in Mickenberg, *American Girls*, 255–256.

<sup>12</sup> See for example Alison Lurie, “Fairy Tale Liberation,” *The New York Review of Books*, December 17, 1970, 42–44, and the subsequent rebuttal by Marcia Lieberman, “‘Some Day My Prince Will Come’: Female Acculturation through the Fairy Tale,” *College English* 34 (1972): 383–395.

While plot points and lines of dialogue are often meant to elicit associations with a particular fairy tale, the most distinct and unmistakable allusions to preexisting stories come in the form of “ballet scenes” in three of the *Anastasia* adaptations. In all three productions, the characters are attending a ballet performance, which becomes the setting for bringing Anya and her grandmother, the Dowager Empress Maria Fyodorovna, together. Yet beyond their importance in the overarching plot, these scenes feature excerpts from three actual ballets (*Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, and *Swan Lake*), with their three distinct female protagonists. While some of the changes to the ballet scene are certainly historical, there is an allegorical element to the selection of each ballet’s fairy-tale heroine in comparison with the specific Anastasia who shows up at the theater. These ballet scenes allow for a side-by-side comparison between the *Anastasia* adaptations, revealing the evolution of Anastasia’s imposed American femininity throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

### *Anastasia as Aurora*

The 1950s are often known as pre-feminist or proto-feminist: a stagnant period that ultimately led to the second-wave feminism that swept the United States during the 1960s.<sup>13</sup> Following the suffrage movement and first-wave feminism at the turn of the century, as well as a period of relative flexibility during the war years, women’s options shrunk considerably as the United States entered the Cold War. A woman’s—particularly a white, middle-class woman’s—place was in the home. Federal funding for child care facilities ended, and the workforce was once again full of men, back from the war and

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<sup>13</sup> Unless otherwise specified, historical context for the first through third waves of US feminism stem from Freedman, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*.



looking for jobs. Artists, directors, and writers had the difficult task of navigating accepted gender roles, popular taste, artistic choices, and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) breathing down the neck of “liberal” ideas of both Hollywood and Broadway.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the 1950s adaptations of *Anastasia* subverted the dangerous Russian subject by featuring the Soviet Union as an antagonist. The 1956 film also kept to the conservative gender roles by adding a romance between Anna and General Bounine, as well as highlighting Anna’s single-minded dedication to the search for a traditional family. As mentioned above, Bolton’s English adaptation of Maurette’s play did not feature a romance between Bounine and Anna, only a former romance with Dr. Michael Serensky, which makes it an intentional choice to indulge in the convention of romance instead of keeping to the narrative of a woman’s quest to discover her identity. While romance and identity should ideally co-exist, it is the power dynamics of Bounine and Anya’s romantic entanglement that prove problematic.

That is what makes the first of the ballets to be featured in an *Anastasia* adaptation so appropriate. The widely known *Sleeping Beauty* by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840–1893) was used for musical content as well as narrative content in the 1956 film production of *Anastasia*. As previously mentioned, the increased budget for the 1956 film allowed for the expansion of the setting to include actual locations as opposed to the series of rooms present in the 1954 play. This change in scenery allowed for a fateful meeting between the Dowager Empress and the hopeful Anastasia over a healthy dollop of Russian ballet, giving audiences even more aristocratic opulence to ogle.

The choice of *Sleeping Beauty* is an informed one on many levels. Based on the film's setting in 1928 and the premiere of *Sleeping Beauty* in 1890, the timing of such a production is accurate.<sup>14</sup> In addition, Tchaikovsky was one of the last composers of the Russian Imperial period, essentially a court composer, and his work largely adhered to Western conventions, leading to nationalist composers, such as those in the Mighty Five, criticizing his work. Yet he is likely the best-known Russian composer outside of Russia, particularly in the United States. As *Anastasia* features the last vestiges of Imperial life, which is in and of itself a blend of Europe and Russia, it seems highly appropriate to select a work by Tchaikovsky.<sup>15</sup> Yet beyond those practical reasons, the choice of *Sleeping Beauty* is thematically intentional. As Tchaikovsky wrote three ballets and ten operas, the amount of theatrical source material available to the filmmakers to choose from for this scene was incredibly vast. Yet it is the character at the center of *Sleeping Beauty* that makes the ballet such a perfect metaphor for the Anastasia the creative team was attempting to portray.

Princess Aurora is an incredibly passive character in *Sleeping Beauty*. She is a victim of her story, nothing more than a casualty of a revenge plot crafted by an ill-spirited fairy, angry at having been excluded from a party. First an infant Aurora is sentenced to death, then the sentence is commuted to a century-long slumber to be broken by a kiss from a prince, and all without her opinion or consent. The triumphant prince has merely to rescue her from her unconscious state, drawn to her "pretty face" alone and

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<sup>14</sup> My plot descriptions of both *Sleeping Beauty* and the later *Swan Lake*, as well as historical background on the ballets, are based on descriptions from John Wiley, *Tchaikovsky's ballets: Swan Lake. Sleeping Beauty. Nutcracker* (London: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Richard Taruskin, "Chaikovsky and the Human: A Centennial Essay," in *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 239–307.

certainly not to the content of her character, and only then is she able to claim her crown and her future. It is impossible not to see the parallels between the sleeping Princess Aurora and the amnesiac Grand Duchess Anastasia, who finds herself rescued and remade by Bounine.

Anna mirrors *Sleeping Beauty*'s inherent lack of agency throughout the entire film. If we are to believe that she actually is Anastasia, as the film implies, she was a victim of her father's foolishness and the politics of the Bolshevik coup. Then, after finding her way to Paris, she is prevented from ending her life and instead pressured into assuming the role of the Grand Duchess at Bounine's demand. Again and again she is ordered and controlled, metaphorically sleeping and waking on command from the men who surround her. Anna, whose true identity as Anastasia is never fully confirmed, ultimately chooses Bounine over her grandmother, who has accepted her for who she is. Anna rejects her identity as the Grand Duchess, and instead finds a place for herself in a nuclear family. Even when Anna makes that ultimate decision, eloping with General Bounine, the audience learns of her decision from the Dowager Empress, as those left behind scramble to make sense of her disappearance. In the end, she is not even allowed to claim her final act of agency for herself.

### *Anastasia as Cinderella*

Nearly fifty years had passed until the appearance of the 1997 film, the next reincarnation of the *Anastasia* story to feature a ballet scene. The Cold War ended, and the Soviet Union collapsed. Second-wave feminism came and went, and now the American women were split between factions in postfeminism and third-wave

feminism.<sup>16</sup> Specifically, some women—the vast majority of them white—felt that feminism was no longer necessary, while others—largely minorities—knew that the United States still had a long way to go. Both terms are problematic because they attempt to encapsulate a wide variety of perspectives, and the definition of both terms has changed significantly over time. Postfeminism in particular has morphed significantly since the early 1990s, and is often used synonymously with third-wave feminism; this is largely incorrect. What can be said for both postfeminism and third-wave feminism is that they were both highly individualistic. While third-wave feminism focused heavily on race and class and how those categories were inseparable from gender (an idea defined as “intersectionality” in 1989), postfeminism instead blamed women for their own circumstances and “den[ied] that social structures limit one’s choices and mobility.”<sup>17</sup> This was the environment in which the creative team for the 1997 *Anastasia* found themselves. As one might imagine, they could not simply reuse the tropes associated with Princess Aurora’s passive presence in order for the new Anastasia to hold a candle to other Disney heroines such as Belle, Esmeralda, and Pocahontas.

Ultimately, if 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox hoped to capture some of the glory of the Disney Renaissance, the 1997 animated *Anastasia* had to be an entirely different creature compared to its 1956 predecessor. Outdated and insipid, Princess Aurora was no longer a viable metaphor for the newly spunky and scrappy orphan Anya, who replaced the tragic and elegant Anna of the Cold War days. Falling squarely into the postfeminist narrative, Anastasia was now a liberated woman, transitioning from masculine to feminine, while

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<sup>16</sup> For more information on the division of third-wave feminism and postfeminism, and the arrival of fourth wave feminism, see Rivers, *Postfeminism(s) and the Arrival of the Fourth Wave*.

<sup>17</sup> Wolf, *Changed For Good*, 163.

remaining strong, resilient, and driven. It is Anya's choices that define her identity throughout the film. And it is her own decision to step beyond the realities of a decade spent bouncing between orphanages to become who she has always meant to be. There was only one ideal fairy tale heroine who could match this narrative of rising from the (literal and metaphorical) ashes: Cinderella.

Selecting Sergei Prokofiev's (1891–1953) *Cinderella* for the new and improved *Anastasia*'s ballet scene was a problematic choice for numerous reasons. First and foremost, the ballet did not premiere until 1945, 19 years after the film's 1926 setting.<sup>18</sup> Such a blatantly anachronistic choice makes clear the screenwriters' intention to represent their Anastasia as a metaphorical Cinderella. There are certainly still remnants of the *Sleeping Beauty* trope from the previous versions, particularly in the opening sequence as the now evil sorcerer Grigori Rasputin storms a party and curses the entire Romanov family (albeit without the spinning wheel of the *Sleeping Beauty* lore). Yet Anya's strong will and dedication to uncovering her own truth make the *Sleeping Beauty* metaphor impossible to sustain.

The 1997 film utilizes the “plucky Cinderella” archetype similar to the one used in *Ever After: A Cinderella Story* (1998), which premiered less than a year after *Anastasia*. Both films attempt to represent the ideal of girl power and liberal feminism, but also recapture the strength of older heroines that have been edited and omitted in the face of patriarchal representations of fairy tales.<sup>19</sup> It is the ultimate postfeminist depiction. Unlike Princess Aurora, lost to time and agency, and like the new Anya, Cinderella

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<sup>18</sup> Dorothea Redepenning, “Sergey Prokofiev,” in *Grove Music Online* (London: Oxford University Press, 2001). <https://doi-org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.22402>

<sup>19</sup> Williams, “The Shoe Still Fits,” 99–115.

exercises more control over her own destiny. Choosing to be kind and good, despite her circumstances, she is rewarded by a fairy godmother who transforms her rags into riches, and she wins the prince not only through her beauty but her kindness. Ironically, Dimitri's character stands in for both the prince and the fairy godmother, just as the Dowager Empress does, as he both transforms her and comes to her aid, helping her face her inner and outer demons. Yet, although Dimitri does often run in to save the day, it is Anya who claims the ultimate victory in her climactic face-off with Rasputin.

Because the film begins with Anya as an orphan, her transformation into a princess feels very much like Cinderella's transformation. Originally dressed in scruffy and ill-fitting clothes, Anya's each subsequent wardrobe change coincides with another change in personality, transforming her further into the princess she always was, embracing gradually more gendered norms with regards to dress and behavior as the story progresses.

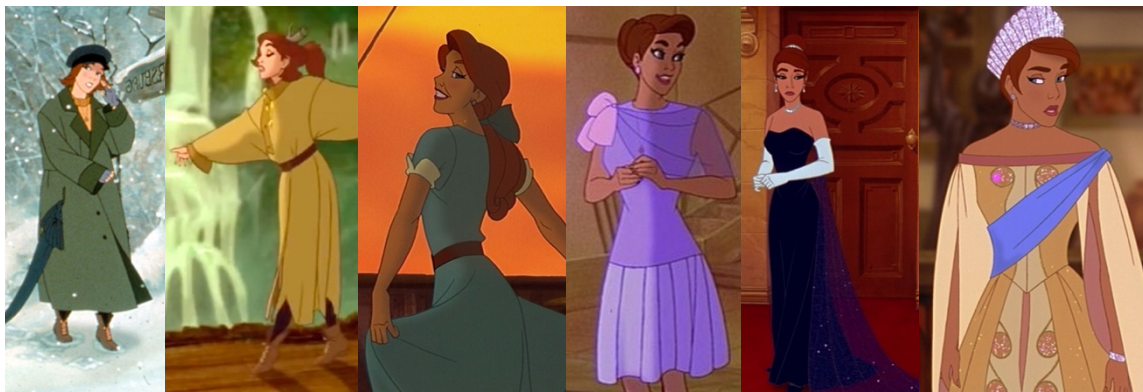


Fig. 10  
Evolution of Anya's Costumes

Both the original narrative of *Cinderella* and this retelling of *Anastasia* reflect the Western mythology regarding class mobility, as both Anya, Dimitri, and Vlad weave their way through all levels of society, from the black market to the aristocracy. Third-wave feminism would argue that the realities of class and race would make this class mobility impossible, demonstrating once again that *Anastasia* connects instead with the ideology of postfeminism. Yet as Anya is portrayed as the real Anastasia and a princess from the very beginning, the Cinderella archetype has to be adapted to accommodate that narrative. While Cinderella's new status as royalty is a consequence of her marriage to the Prince, Anya is born a princess, but her elopement with Dimitri makes it impossible for her to remain so. Anya's choice to surrender her title to be with Dimitri is a slightly double-edged sword with regards to the representation of her femininity, as it is present in all of the adaptations since the original play. It is certainly possible to use that choice to demonstrate her agency—choosing the life that she wants instead of the life that is expected of her—but it is also important to note that Anya is still ultimately dependent upon her connection to the male characters in the story. While Anya does not end up with a prince, as Dimitri is a former servant boy (unlike Bounine, the former Prince), she still surrenders her longed-for future to be with the man responsible for transforming and saving her, portrayed as the man responsible for helping her find herself: Dimitri. Therefore, the Cinderella archetype—as well as Anya's portrayal in the 1997 animated film—has limits, leaving room for the further development of Anya's independence in line with the most recent feminist wave.

### Anastasia as Odette

Now in late 2010s, the gender discourse in the United States is framed within the ideology of the so-called fourth-wave feminism. Largely dependent on technology, the emphasis of the new wave since 2012 has been sexual harassment and workplace discrimination. While it might not seem possible to connect Twitter, sexual harassment, and the Anastasia myth, the creative team behind the 2017 *Anastasia* has done their best to adapt the new musical to reflect sexual freedom and consent, all the while continuing the individualistic quest for identity on behalf of all the lead characters.<sup>20</sup> That said, their efforts are ultimately in vain, because the necessity for Anastasia's elopement discredits the bigger-picture aim of fourth-wave feminism.

For this last ballet scene, the show's writers turn once more to the music of Tchaikovsky, but this time choose *Swan Lake*. Because of the emphasis on historical accuracy dominating the current shows on Broadway (see Chapter 3), the change from *Cinderella* to *Swan Lake* can be seen as a necessity in that regard. After all, *Swan Lake* premiered in 1877, and was well-loved by Parisian and Russian audiences alike by the late 1920s. In fact, the standard version that most audiences know today, and the Imperial Theater's staple, was choreographed in 1895, just in time for Nicholas II's coronation. *Swan Lake* was the epitome of a classical ballet that was associated with the Russian Imperial era, as opposed to modern ballet that was essentially designed for the new Western audience. This is illustrated by a brief dialogue exchange between two Russian émigrés early in Act II in *Anastasia*. While preparing to enter the Neva Club, these

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<sup>20</sup> I have based my reading of fourth-wave feminism using the following works: Rivers, *Postfeminism(s)* and Stephanie Zacharek, Eliana Dockterman, and Haley Sweetland Edwards, "Person of the Year: The Silence Breakers, the Voices that Launched a Movement," in *Time Magazine*, December 18, 2017.



émigrés—as nostalgic for the Imperial period as ever—have a conversation in which they lament the poor quality of a Stravinsky ballet they have just seen, using its original French title, *Le Sacre du Printemps*.<sup>21</sup> It is interesting that the dialogue would include *The Rite of Spring* but in such a way as to ensure that most American audience members would miss the reference entirely. In addition, while the selection of *Swan Lake* was more historically informed, a reference to a 1929 performance of *The Rite of Spring* was not, as the last production to be staged in Paris was in 1920.<sup>22</sup> It seems the reference was only included to highlight the disdain for “modern” Stravinsky’s lack of refinement and sophistication in the ballet, in juxtaposition to the émigrés’ nostalgia for Tchaikovsky and the Imperial Era.

However, the specific use of *Swan Lake* once again allows one to ask the same question we did of the 1956 film: with dozens of potential ballets and operas by Tchaikovsky and various other Imperial composers available to incorporate into the show, why *Swan Lake*? It is true that the historical decision to change the ballet, as well as American familiarity with both *Swan Lake* and Tchaikovsky stand out as primary reasons. It also comes down to thematic choices. The widespread “borrowing” of themes from both Tchaikovsky’s music and *Swan Lake*’s narrative by composer Stephen Flaherty and author Terrence McNally is pervasive throughout the work. By making these thematic connections, it is more than simply a historical choice to include the ballet. Those borrowed themes demonstrate how this new musical corresponds to contemporary fourth-wave feminism.

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<sup>21</sup> This dialogue is not included in the script for *Anastasia*, but was present in the staged production currently running on Broadway, which I transcribed at a performance on January 21, 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Eric Walter White, *Stravinsky: The Composer and His Works* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966).

In this revised *Anastasia*, the entire show explores the meaning of identity, whether self-made identity or inherent identity, making *Swan Lake* an ideal fairy tale trope. In most versions of the story, Odette is a princess cursed by the evil sorcerer, Rothbart, and forced to live her life as a swan. Prince Siegfried discovers the truth about her identity and sets about breaking the curse, only to fall victim to Rothbart and his daughter Odile, who tricks the prince by impersonating Odette. The real Odette attempts to stop Siegfried from mistakenly betraying her, but she is too late. Brokenhearted, she returns to the lake; there Siegfried finds her, overcome by grief and guilt. After dueling Rothbart, he surrenders his life to be with her. In the end, Odette has very little control over her own circumstances, first due to Rothbart's curse, and then due to Siegfried's fatal impulsiveness.

As is often the case, many happier renditions of the tale proliferated over the years, but the basic premise and central conflict has remained constant. It is this struggle that is illustrated in the ballet scene of the 2017 *Anastasia*, which made no effort to represent the ending of *Swan Lake*, only the struggle between the opposing forces of Odette, Siegfried, Rothbart, and Odile. Through the various verses of the "Quartet at the Ballet" different characters from the ballet dance while their corresponding character in *Anastasia* sings. Rothbart is Gleb, Odette is Anya, and Dmitry is Siegfried.<sup>23</sup> In the first verse, performed by Anya, Odette performs a short solo dance:

Can this be the evening? Can this be the place?  
Am I only dreaming, looking at her [the Dowager] face?  
Everything I've wanted suddenly so clear!  
My past and my future so near...

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<sup>23</sup> McNally, *Anastasia* (2017), 94–96.

Then, as Dmitry begins his verse, Siegfried joins Odette in a dance:

Next to me this frightened girl,  
Holding tight as the dancers whirl.  
Keep your nerve and see this through.  
It's what you've come to do...

Then lastly, after the Dowager Empress sings while various ballet dancers perform an interlude, Gleb's verse introduces Rothbart, who appears just as the main theme from *Swan Lake* plays and Gleb begins to sing:

She's near at hand, yet here I stand,  
My heart and mind at war...  
The times much change  
The world must change!  
And love is not what revolution's for...

When the song has ended, and Dmitry's attempt to convince the Empress to allow Anya an audience fails miserably, we see no more of the allegorical fairy tale.

Beyond the basic premise behind including *Swan Lake* for use in the ballet scene, its narrative centers around the exploration of identity, a theme closely mirrored in the 2017 *Anastasia*. As lyricist Lynn Ahrens states in a promotional video for the production, "it has at its core this search for self...and I think that's why the fairy tale, if you want to call it that, has lasted all of these years."<sup>24</sup> The juxtaposition of Odette and Odile in *Swan Lake* represents two distinct identities behind the same face, which can be directly related to the duality of Anya and Anastasia. In addition, the fact that Odette was a princess all along and forced to live as a lowly swan until the spell could be broken rings heavily of the *Anastasia* mythology.

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<sup>24</sup> *Anastasia the Musical*, "Journey to Broadway: The Story," YouTube video, uploaded on March 10, 2017, <https://youtu.be/FizSMsPg2DY>, 00:50–00:60

As much as the creative minds behind this production like to spin their tale as indicative of feminine agency, they are ultimately limited by the fairy tale genre that they are attempting to navigate. The use of *Swan Lake* is also limiting, because Odette is only slightly better off than Princess Aurora with respect to her agency. Odette once again is the blameless victim, and while she is at least conscious when the prince falls in love with her, it is the prince's actions that lead to her downfall (or happiness, depending on which version one prefers).

Similarly to the 1997 animated version, this adaptation of *Anastasia* assumes a feminist stance, but offers a mass-mediated idea of feminism. Under this perspective, individual women can be strong and achieve equality through personal actions, but those actions do not challenge or change the underlying patriarchal structure of society. The 2017 Anya is admittedly far stronger than her counterpart Odette, and her character often veers further away from her fairy tale model than the previous two Anastasias, but her strength ends at the limits of her own motivation. Instead of having Anya embrace her identity and her role as Anastasia, she abandons her title and everything her family represented for a man, ultimately stepping away from her potential. This concept is mirrored in one of Alexandra Kollontai's Bolshevik essays, which states:

The [western] feminists seek equality in the framework of the existing class society, in no way do they attack the basis of this society. They fight for prerogatives for themselves, without challenging the existing prerogatives and privileges.<sup>25</sup>

Realistically Anastasia does have to step away from her identity as the Grand Duchess if the show writers are to keep to their avowed goal to stay true to history (for no

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<sup>25</sup> Alexandra Kollontai, "The Social Basis of the Woman Question," from *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*, Marxists Internet Archive, 1905.

real Anastasia suddenly appeared in the late 1920s). Yet, they portray her elopement with Dmitry as an intentional choice rather than a historical inevitability. This makes Anya's final decision disappointing, for it severely undermines her character's initial strength and individualism. At least in the 1997 animated film, Anya destroys the evil she faces with her own grit and strength (and little support from Dimitri), whereas in the updated version it is her beauty that saves her, for the antagonist Soviet official, Gleb, finds himself too entranced by her to kill her. In the staged ballet scene and corresponding quartet, Dmitry and Gleb sing about their attraction to Anya— "Someone holds her safe and warm, someone rescues her from the storm" —without allowing for any independent thought on her part.<sup>26</sup>

Despite missing the bigger picture, the *Anastasia* musical does contribute to the discourse of fourth-wave feminism in the way it stresses sexual and romantic consent, as well as its representation of thinly concealed sexual violence. For instance, when Anya finally chooses Dmitry over her past, she is the one who grabs his suitcase, uses it as a stepping stool, and instigates their first kiss. Throughout the show, Anya demonstrates control of her physical space and body, even fighting off a group of thugs and rescuing Dmitry. She later explains that she "learned to take care of herself" during her journey across the country, a line that holds vast implications for her experiences, some less pleasant than others. In a recent interview with *Playbill*, Lynn Ahrens said that the musical found an unexpected political "relevance" since the Women's March in Washington, D.C. in January 2017:

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<sup>26</sup> McNally, *Anastasia*, 95.

[Anya] is walking across a country to find out who she is and what's she made of," Ahrens says of Anya. "And I thought, 'We are all doing that this year, and next year, and for however long it takes.' So it put a new spin on the show to me."<sup>27</sup>

The creative minds behind the 2017 *Anastasia* have been dedicated to pushing the message of individualism and identity throughout the show's evolution. As most modern productions do, *Anastasia* has an active social media presence. It aims to give a voice to the audience members that attend the production via their "On My Journey" campaign, which is still running despite having been on Broadway for over a year now. In the lead-up to the show and throughout the first year of its run, the marketing team released a printed campaign using the #OnMyJourney and #AnastasiaMusical hashtags, which provided a platform for fans and attendees to voice dreams, hopes, and aspirations. The marketing campaign fits squarely within both the individualistic message of the show, and shared communication of experience (particularly online) that is inherent in fourth-wave feminism.

### *Anastasia as...Anastasia?*

It seems the ultimate irony that what made the historical Anastasia an immediate disappointment to her family—her gender—now serves as a key tenet of her representation in Western stage and screen adaptations. The fourth daughter, born to parents and a nation longing for a Tsarevich, not a Grand Duchess, Anastasia likely faced a great deal of self doubt as she saw herself for what she was not, instead of what she

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<sup>27</sup> Adam Hetrick, "How Broadway's *Anastasia* is a Very Different Story Than the Animated Musical," *Playbill* (March 22, 2016), <http://www.playbill.com/article/how-broadways-anastasia-is-a-very-different-story-than-the-animated-musical>.

was. Even now, 100 years after her death, Anastasia is still not allowed an identity of her own. A tragic and elegant young woman, a spunky and resourceful orphan, or a homesick and lonely lost princess—an Aurora, Cinderella, or Odette—are after all mere figments of our imagination. As ever she was, Anastasia remains a forged feminine face belonging not to history, but to myth.

## Conclusion:

### “The Play is Done. Go Home”: *Anastasia*’s Legacy

When the final Romanov grave site was discovered in 2007, it ended one of the longest-lasting mysteries of the twentieth century. Since then, the remains of both Alexei and one of the daughters, either Maria or Anastasia, have yet to be interred with the rest of the family in the St. Catherine Chapel of the Peter and Paul Cathedral. As 2018 marks the centennial of the Romanov murders, it would be surprising if the Russian Federation did not use the anniversary to reunite the Romanov family in death, appealing to the sentiments of fascinated individuals the world over, and pandering to the Russian Orthodox church, as Putin is known to do.

While the burial of the remaining Romanov children will finally end Anastasia’s true story, the constant conjuring of her fictional simulacra on stage and screen seems unlikely to end any time soon. In 2016, it was announced that Freeform, the new ABC Family, had picked up a TV series based once again on the youngest Grand Duchess.<sup>1</sup> Girl power is taken even further in this pilot, where Anastasia joins forces with a French espionage agency to seek revenge for her family’s murder, simultaneously “working to prevent another world war,” supposedly making her the “world’s first female spy,” when clearly there have been countless female spies prior to the 1920s. In addition, a new film called *Anastasia* is currently in production for a slated release in late 2018, telling a new variant of the story: that Anastasia escaped through a portal in time and somehow wound

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<sup>1</sup> Jackson McHenry, “Freeform Is Developing a Show About Anastasia Romanov for All Those Teens Who Love Decades-Old Conspiracy Theories,” *Vulture*, March 2, 2016.



up in America in 1988.<sup>2</sup> It would seem that while perhaps the specific evolution of Anastasia's and Anna Anderson's life as represented through Marcelle Maurette and Guy Bolton's original play will end with the new musical, her mythology in popular and artistic representations is far from over.

The way these stories are situated in the cultural and political makeup of the United States ultimately reveals far more about the US perspectives and values than it does about the Romanov tragedy. Each production seems to deviate further and further away from verifiable facts, projecting ideas about immigration, Russian villainy, and feminism at the expense of history, particularly as the United States' already convoluted relationship with Russia becomes increasingly complicated and hostile. It seems cruel to continue to revive the Romanov ghosts to serve our own purposes, particularly when we cannot manage to get the story right.

It is important to note that these projections do not only apply to the *Anastasia* mythos. Similar trends can be found in a great many other shows featuring Russian settings and characters, which are becoming far more frequent than they have been in the past. In the 2016-2017 Broadway season alone, there were three shows featuring Russian characters and settings: an adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* in *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812*; Anton Chekhov's classic tragicomedy, *The Cherry Orchard*; as well as *Anastasia* itself.<sup>3</sup> The 2018-2019 season promises to hold similar interest for Russia fans, due to the possible revival of 1988 flop and Cold War allegory,

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<sup>2</sup> Leah Silverman, "Everything You Need to Know About the New Live Action *Anastasia* Movie," *Town and Country Magazine*, January 31, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Ashley Lee, "All the Broadway Shows of the 2016-2017 Season," *The Hollywood Reporter*, June 29, 2016.

*Chess*, which underwent serious revisions, and had a trial run in a concert setting at the Kennedy Center earlier this year, and has since revived in London's West End.<sup>4</sup>

It is my hope that this thesis contributes to the still slim body of scholarship that focuses on theatrical representations of Russia, whether musical or not. In the meantime, only time will tell whether or not the most recent *Anastasia* will surpass the previous renditions. Having opened in 2017, it has already survived a year on Broadway. Capturing the same tourist audience that Disney notoriously relies on for its productions, *Anastasia* has a built-in income that many shows cannot claim to have. Yet now that Disney's adaptation of *Frozen* has opened across the street, the true economic potential of America's appropriated princess has yet to be tested.

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Marks, "'Chess' has the best cast of any musical this season. But the show itself has issues," *The Washington Post*, February 16, 2018 and Hannah Vine, "First Look at Michael Ball, Alexandra Burke, More in London *Chess* Revival," *Playbill*, April 26, 2018.

Appendix I:  
List of Primary Characters and Settings in Each *Anastasia* Adaptation

Blue denotes a character change from the previous adaptation.  
Yellow indicates a new character.

**1954 *Anastasia***  
Setting: Berlin, 1926

Anna Broun	Amnesiac who believes herself to be Anastasia
Prince Arcade Bounine	Taxi-Driver and ex-General of the Don Cossacks
Boris Chernov	Banker; Bounine's associate
Piotr Constantinovich Petrovin	Artist; Bounine's associate
Varya and Sergei	More of Bounine's associates/servants
Counsellor Drivinitz	The leader of Bounine's backers and financiers
Dr. Michael Serensky	Anna's lover from her time in Bucharest
Dowager Empress of Russia	Princess of Denmark; Nicholas II's mother
Baroness Livenbaum	The Dowager Empress' Lady-in-Waiting
Prince Paul	Her grandnephew; Anastasia's childhood sweetheart

**1956 *Anastasia***  
Setting: Paris and Copenhagen, 1928

Anna Koreff	Amnesiac who believes herself to be Anastasia
General Sergei Bounine	Owner of a Russian restaurant; Ex-Cossack General
Piotr Ivanovich Petrovin	Bounine's associate
Boris Chernov	Bounine's associate
Dowager Empress of Russia	Princess of Denmark; Nicholas II's mother
Baroness Elena von Livenbaum	The Dowager Empress' Lady-in-Waiting
Prince Paul von Haraldberg	Her cousin; Anastasia's childhood sweetheart

### **1965 *Anya***

Setting: Berlin, 1925

Anya Romanoff	Amnesiac who believes herself to be Anastasia
Prince Bounine	Taxi-Driver and ex-General in the Kulom Cossacks
Katrina and Josef	The owners of the Cafe Czarina
Petrovin	Business man; Bounine's partner
Chernov	Banker, investor, and Bounine's partner
Drivinitz and Dorn	Members of the Russian Club and Investors
Genia, the Countess Hohenstadt	Bounine's lover
Dowager Empress of Russia	Princess of Denmark and Nicholas II's mother
Prince Paul	Her nephew, and Anastasia's childhood sweetheart
Baroness Livenbaum	The Dowager Empress' Lady-in-Waiting

### **1997 *Anastasia***

Setting: St. Petersburg and Paris, 1926  
(Prologue: St. Petersburg, 1916)

Anya/Anastasia Nikolaevna	Amnesiac who believes herself to be Anastasia
Dimitri	Former palace kitchen boy; current con man
Vladimir "Vlad" Vasilovich	Former Count and friend of Dimitri
Grigori Rasputin	Former friend of Nicholas II; fraud and villain
Bartok	Rasputin's henchman/sidekick; an albino bat
Sophie Somorkov-Smirnoff	The Dowager Empress' Cousin and Confidant
Dowager Empress of Russia	Princess of Denmark and Nicholas II's mother
Tsar Nicholas II	Emperor of all Russia

### **2017 *Anastasia***

Setting: St.Petersburg/Leningrad and Paris, 1927  
(Prologue: St. Petersburg, 1906 and 1917)

Anya/Anastasia Nikolaevna	Amnesiac who believes herself to be Anastasia
Dmitry	Street urchin; conman
Vladimir “Vlad” Popov	Conman; pretended to be a nobleman pre-Revolution
Gleb	Soviet official; son of a Romanov executioner
Dowager Empress	Princess of Denmark and Nicholas II’s mother
Countess Lily	The Dowager Empress’ Lady-in-Waiting
Count Ipolitov	Nobleman and intellectual fleeing the Soviet Union
Count Leopold	Money-hungry monarchist; distant relative
Tsar Nicholas II and Tsarina Alexandra	Emperor and Empress of all Russia
Maria Romanov, Olga Romanov, Tatiana Romanov, and Alexei Romanov	Anastasia’s siblings

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